

Official Report of the  
One Hundred Sixty-ninth  
Annual General

# CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ  
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Tabernacle  
Salt Lake City, Utah

**April 3 and 4, 1999**



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# Report of the 169th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The 169th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 3, 1999, at 10:00 A.M.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. on Saturday and Sunday, April 3 and 4, 1999. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, April 3, at 6:00 P.M.

President Gordon B. Hinckley presided at all sessions of the conference and conducted the Saturday morning, general priesthood, and Sunday morning sessions. President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Saturday afternoon session. President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Sunday afternoon session.

The conference was carried by satellite transmission to thousands of Church buildings in many countries. In areas that did not receive this transmission, videotapes of the conference were sent to local distribution centers and made available to all Church units. In addition, television and radio stations and the LDS Radio Network carried portions or all of the general sessions to large audiences throughout North America.

## General Authorities present

The following General Authorities of the Church attended one or more of the sessions:

*The First Presidency:* Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson, and James E. Faust

*The Quorum of the Twelve:* Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott,

Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring

*The Presidency of the Seventy:* L. Aldin Porter, Joe J. Christensen, Harold G. Hillam, Earl C. Tingey, D. Todd Christofferson, Marlin K. Jensen, and David E. Sorenson

*The First Quorum of the Seventy:* Angel Abrea, Carlos H. Amado, Neil L. Andersen, Ben B. Banks, Merrill J. Bateman, William R. Bradford, Monte J. Brough, F. Enzo Busche, John K. Carmack, Sheldon F. Child, Gary J. Coleman, Spencer J. Condie, Gene R. Cook, Quentin L. Cook, Robert K. Dellenbach, John B. Dickson, Charles Didier, Loren C. Dunn, Vaughn J. Featherstone, John H. Groberg, Bruce C. Hafen, F. Melvin Hammond, F. Burton Howard, Jay E. Jensen, Kenneth Johnson, L. Lionel Kendrick, Wm. Rolfe Kerr, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Cree-L Kofford, John M. Madsen, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Alexander B. Morrison, Dennis B. Neuenschwander, Glenn L. Pace, Andrew W. Peterson, Rex D. Pinegar, Hugh W. Pinnock, Carl B. Pratt, Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Francisco J. Viñas, and W. Craig Zwick

*The Second Quorum of the Seventy:* Richard D. Allred, Athos M. Amorín, E. Ray Bateman, L. Edward Brown, Eran A. Call, Val R. Christensen, Richard E. Cook, Claudio R. M. Costa, Adhemar Damiani, Duane B. Gerrard, Ronald T. Halverson, Wayne M. Hancock, J. Kent Jolley, W. Don Ladd, James O. Mason, Richard J. Maynes, Dale E. Miller, Earl M. Monson, Merrill C. Oaks, Stephen B. Oveson, Bruce D. Porter, H. Bryan Richards, Lynn G. Robbins, Ned B. Roueché, Dennis E. Simmons, Donald L. Staheli, David R. Stone, H. Bruce Stucki, Jerald L. Taylor, D. Lee Tobler, Richard E. Turley Sr., Gordon T. Watts, Stephen A. West, Robert J. Whetten, Lance B.

Wickman, Richard H. Winkel, Richard B. Wirthlin, Ray H. Wood, and Robert S. Wood

*The Presiding Bishopric:* H. David Burton, Richard C. Edgley, and Keith B. McMullin

### Other authorities present

Other Church authorities in attendance included general, area, stake, and ward officers.

## SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first session of the 169th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 3, 1999, at 10:00 A.M. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Mormon Youth Chorus, with Robert C. Bowden conducting and Linda Margetts at the organ.

To begin the meeting, the chorus sang "The Morning Breaks." President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

### President Gordon B. Hinckley

My dear brothers and sisters, we greet you this morning as we assemble in the first general session of the 169th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

All of the General Authorities are in attendance except Elder Andrew W. Peterson.

We acknowledge the General Authorities seated on the stand at the overflow

locations in the nearby Assembly Hall and Joseph Smith Memorial Building and likewise acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Men, Young Women, Sunday School, and Primary general presidencies seated on the stand in the Tabernacle.

We extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us.

The music for this session will be given by the Mormon Youth Chorus, under the direction of Robert C. Bowden, with Linda Margetts at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "The Morning Breaks" and will now favor us with "Jesus, Lover of My Soul." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Presidency of the Seventy.

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The chorus sang "Jesus, Lover of My Soul."

Elder D. Todd Christofferson offered the invocation.

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## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### Gathering for conference

Welcome to conference! We again welcome you, my brothers and sisters, to this great world conference. Six months between conferences once seemed like a long time. Now it seems to pass ever so rapidly. We gather together again as a

great family, more than 10 million strong, to listen and learn from those who are called to lead, to renew our faith and build our resolution to live better, and to mingle together in pleasant sociality.

We are a happy and blessed people, working to build the cause and kingdom of God on earth. Regardless of race or

nationality, whether we be poor or rich, old or young, we meet to share our common testimony of the Lord, in whose name we worship.

### **Work of the Church moves forward**

I am pleased to report that the Church is in good condition. The work continues to move forward; I will point out just two or three areas.

We now have approximately 60,000 missionaries. Come July there will be 333 missions. We are trying to fulfill the mandate of the Lord when He said, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 28:19).

Additionally, there are 137,629 volunteers and missionaries in nonproselyting activities. These are, for the most part, mature individuals who contribute their time and talents without compensation of any kind but with a great love for the work of the kingdom. Their united contribution is the equivalent of 15,174 full-time employees with a payroll value of \$531 million. What a remarkable thing this is!

Our family history work goes forward with increasing momentum. There is a tremendous interest in one's roots everywhere. As the years pass, all of this will lead to the fulfillment of the great purpose for which this work is done. The hearts of the children are being turned to their fathers, that the purposes of the Lord may be fulfilled.

We are constructing temples on a scale never before dreamed of to carry forward this work to its destined conclusion. Since last October we have dedicated temples in Anchorage, Alaska; Colonia Juárez, Mexico; and Madrid, Spain. It is anticipated that we will dedicate 14 more during the remainder of this year.

This is a tremendous undertaking, with many problems, but no matter the

difficulty, things work out and I am confident we will reach our goal.

We are constructing chapels in large numbers to accommodate the needs of our people. There is an old proverb that says it is an ill wind that blows no good. The economic problems that have afflicted Asia and other parts of the world have brought lower real estate prices, thus permitting us to acquire building sites at lower costs.

In many areas of the Church, sacrament meeting attendance is up and the level of activity is increasing.

I mention these items simply to indicate the robust growth of the work throughout the world.

### **Strengthen and value each member**

We are prone to speak of large numbers such as the total membership of the Church. But we must never forget that we are all individuals with our own needs and problems, our own hopes and dreams, our own faith and convictions. Some are strong, some weak, but we all try. We have problems to deal with—they are serious and difficult. We need one another to build and strengthen each other. We must never lose sight of the fact that we are to "succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees" (D&C 81:5).

We must never forget that we live in a world of great diversity. The people of the earth are all our Father's children and are of many and varied religious persuasions. We must cultivate tolerance and appreciation and respect one another. We have differences of doctrine. This need not bring about animosity or any kind of holier-than-thou attitude.

At this moment our hearts reach out to the brutalized people of Kosovo. It is difficult for us to understand how those who claim to be Christians can act so barbaric to those of another faith. I am grateful that we are rushing humanitarian aid to the victims of these atrocities.

I am pleased to report that the Church is better known and better understood. Generally the media have been kind to us. They have dealt honestly with us. There are exceptions, of course, and this we regret. The old images of the past continue to be dragged forth by those who deal in sensationalism and exploitation. But television images fade almost immediately with the tremendous amount of information given. Yesterday's newspaper is soon forgotten. Meanwhile the Church goes forward on its appointed mission in the direction of its appointed destiny.

We will work together with patience, never losing sight of the great mission given us by Him who is our leader and whose Church this is.

Now I invite you to listen to the Brethren and sisters. All who speak feel

the responsibility in so doing. Much of prayer and effort have gone into that which will be said. May our faith be increased in the great, salient underpinnings of our doctrine and our practice as members of this great Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The chorus sang "O My Father."

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### President Hinckley

The choir just sang "O My Father." We will now be pleased to hear from Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Elder Joe J. Christensen of the Presidency of the Seventy.

## Elder L. Tom Perry

### Sunday School organized

On Sunday morning, December 9, 1849, at 8:00, about 30 children between the ages of 8 and 13 arrived in a small classroom that had been built in a home. They stamped their feet on the threshold, shook the snow off their coats and hats, then took their places on simple benches. They waited expectantly for the class to begin. It was a cold, snowy day outside, but the fireplace radiated a warm and friendly glow. Richard Ballantyne's eyes shone brightly as he called the Sunday School to order. He led the boys and girls in a song, and then he gave a quiet but fervent prayer, dedicating this room in his home for teaching children the gospel of Jesus Christ. His voice was rich, and his words rolled forth as words do under the spell of reverence and emotion. Thus we have the founding of the first Sunday School in the Salt Lake Valley.

Organizing a Sunday School was not foreign to him. In his native Scotland he had organized a Sunday School in the Relief Presbyterian Church, of which he was an active member. It was natural for him to have a great desire to educate young people in the knowledge of the gospel. He had been reared in a home where his father was fond of repeating from memory whole chapters of the Bible and then reciting them to his children. It was a home where they would not even take a sip of water without first taking off their hats and saying grace, as was also the custom before they would eat a meal.

Rumors were spreading around the Scottish home that a new prophet had been raised up in America. At first Richard paid little attention to these rumors, but as his religious questions became more perplexing, he openly sought further light and knowledge. It was in 1841 that Elder Orson Pratt appeared in



Edinburgh. Richard listened to his message and investigated the Church for a year. Finally he was converted and was baptized in the North Sea. He said, "I was so convinced that Joseph Smith was a prophet and the Book of Mormon was the word of God, and that if I did not accept it I would be damned."

As was the case of many of those early converts to the Church, he sold his business and emigrated to America, taking with him his mother and some of his brothers and sisters. They arrived in Nauvoo on November 11, 1843, at a time when there was great turmoil in the city. They eventually left Illinois and made the trek to Winter Quarters. There he was married and soon made preparation for the long journey west. They arrived in the Salt Lake Valley in September of 1848 and immediately commenced building a home. It was in this home that the first Sunday School in the valley was held. When the chapel—the old 14th Ward—was completed, the Sunday School moved to the new meetinghouse.

Brother Ballantyne had a fervent desire to teach young people the gospel of our Lord and Savior throughout his entire life. Thanks be to the late Conway Ballantyne Sonne, a cousin of mine, for this history of the first Sunday School (see Conway B. Sonne, *Knight of the Kingdom: The Story of Richard Ballantyne* [1949], 8–49).

### Everyone has a responsibility to teach

As we contemplate celebrating the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Sunday School, it should be a time of reawakening within us our responsibility to be good teachers. Nearly all of our associations and relationships involve the process of teaching. One of the major responsibilities of parents is to teach their children. Many of our assignments in the world of work involve being a teacher. Every assignment we receive in the Church requires some form of teach-

ing. The Lord directed us in the Doctrine and Covenants:

"And I give unto you a commandment that you shall teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom.

"Teach ye diligently and my grace shall attend you, that you may be instructed more perfectly in theory, in principle, in doctrine, in the law of the gospel, in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God, that are expedient for you to understand" (D&C 88:77–78).

January 1 we received a new resource to assist us in becoming more effective teachers. The new *Church Handbook of Instructions* has a section discussing gospel teaching and leadership. The principles explained in this section have universal application. Two sets of instructions in this section deal with special ways that teachers can prepare themselves to become more effective in their assignments.

### Teach as the Savior taught

The first set of instructions encourages us to follow the Savior's example and teach as He taught. Through divine instruction, the Lord was prepared for the greatest of all roles in mortality. In Luke we read, "And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him" (Luke 2:40).

This is followed by an account in the scriptures of the Savior's early life. When He was 12 years of age, He accompanied His parents to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of the Passover, as was their custom. As they were returning to their home after the celebration, they discovered that Jesus was not with them. Returning to Jerusalem, they found Him.

"And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, and they were hearing him, and asking him questions.

"And all who heard him were astonished at his understanding, and answers" (Joseph Smith Translation, Luke 2:46–47).

This example from the Savior's early life shows the sense of urgency He felt about teaching the word of God. One prophet who felt a similar sense of urgency was Jacob, the younger brother of Nephi. Jacob and his brother Joseph were consecrated priests and teachers of their people. They took their responsibilities very seriously, assuming they themselves would be held accountable if they did not teach the people with all diligence. In verse 19 of the first chapter of Jacob, he wrote:

"And we did magnify our office unto the Lord, taking upon us the responsibility, answering the sins of the people upon our own heads if we did not teach them the word of God with all diligence; wherefore, by laboring with our might their blood might not come upon our garments; otherwise their blood would come upon our garments, and we would not be found spotless at the last day."

### **Study the word of God before teaching**

Like the Savior, teachers should also feel a sense of urgency about learning the word of God. We discover in section 93 of the Doctrine and Covenants that the Savior did not receive a "fulness at . . . first, but received grace for grace" (v. 12). In the Lord's admonition to Hyrum Smith, He declared sage counsel to all teachers. He said, "Seek not to declare my word, but first seek to obtain my word, and then shall your tongue be loosed; then, if you desire, you shall have my Spirit and my word, yea, the power of God unto the convincing of men" (D&C 11:21).

Fundamental to becoming good teachers is serious study of the word of the Lord, that we are able to impart our acquired knowledge to others.

How blessed we are to have the words of the holy prophets preserved through the many dispensations of time. Because the Lord commanded His prophets to make a record of His teachings, the Old and New Testaments give us

a continuity of gospel teaching from the very beginning of time. Then the miracle of the Book of Mormon was brought forth as another witness of the mission of our Lord and Savior. Added to this we have the revelations contained in the Doctrine and Covenants and the teachings and revelations contained in the Pearl of Great Price.

Because teaching is such a universal assignment, it is requisite of every member of the Church to prepare himself or herself through study of the holy scriptures.

### **Teach by the Spirit**

The second set of instructions in the teaching section of the new handbook addresses the importance of teaching by the Spirit. In the Doctrine and Covenants, section 42, we read:

"And they shall observe the covenants and church articles to do them, and these shall be their teachings, as they shall be directed by the Spirit.

"And the Spirit shall be given unto you by the prayer of faith; and if ye receive not the Spirit ye shall not teach" (vv. 13–14).

It is our privilege to have the Holy Ghost, a member of the Godhead, as our constant companion to edify and inspire us in our preparation as teachers. We should prepare ourselves through obedience to God's commandments, that our confidence will wax strong when we call upon the Lord, that His Spirit might magnify us as we teach. When we have the Spirit to direct us, we are capable of teaching with great power. Again in the Doctrine and Covenants we read how the Spirit-assisted flow of knowledge between giver and receiver is the very essence of the inspired teaching:

"Verily I say unto you, he that is ordained of me and sent forth to preach the word of truth by the Comforter, in the Spirit of truth, doth he preach it by the Spirit of truth or some other way?

"And if it be by some other way it is not of God.

"And again, he that receiveth the word of truth, doth he receive it by the Spirit of truth or some other way?

"If it be some other way it is not of God.

"Therefore, why is it that ye cannot understand and know, that he that receiveth the word by the Spirit of truth receiveth it as it is preached by the Spirit of truth?

"Wherefore, he that preacheth and he that receiveth, understand one another, and both are edified and rejoice together" (D&C 50:17-22).

Our teaching will be effective if we approach it humbly through prayer and study. We will then be assisted by the Spirit in imparting the word, consistent and in harmony with what the Lord would have us teach.

### **Example of a teacher's influence**

Most teachers never realize the full impact of their teaching. I am certain a special Primary teacher never anticipated that the way she taught would impress me so much that many years later I would emulate her teaching technique in a boardroom in New York City. She was very skilled in holding our attention by the use of visual aids. A flannel board, which she used in her presentations, was popular in those days.

Now fast-forward with me to a critical time in my professional career. In 1962 I accepted a position in New York as the controller of a large retail firm. One of my new responsibilities was to make a budget presentation to the board of directors. Weeks before the presentation, I was called into the office of the president of the firm and told how demanding the board of directors was on the person who presented the budget. I was warned to make a presentation that would captivate the board and guarantee support for our proposed budget. I left his office

feeling overwhelmed and burdened with self-doubt.

The next day I visited the boardroom, looked around, and tried to find a way that I could make the presentation effective. As I sat in the boardroom, I observed a large piece of flannel that covered the better part of the wall. I'm sure it had been placed there for its acoustic value. As I looked at the large piece of flannel, I thought of my Primary teacher and the use of the flannel board. I sent to Salt Lake for some flannel-backed paper. When it arrived, I prepared three different projections of the budget on that paper.

As the budget presentation was made and the discussion followed, I could pull off one budget projection and replace it with another as appropriate. The members of the board were fascinated with my presentation using the flannel board technique. Each time I would present one of our second options and tell the board the consequences, they would immediately go back to the first budget projection, the one we really wanted to have approved. The presentation seemed to be very effective, and when it was over, I was complimented, thanks to my Primary teacher. I don't know if the presentation was the reason or not, but the following week I was called into the president's office and informed that the board of directors had approved my promotion from the management level to the officer level.

This is just a simple example of how effective teaching, whether it be in the home, a Church classroom, or some other place, can have a profound effect on an individual and his or her future. A great teacher can make a great difference in a great many lives.

President David O. McKay gave us this instruction on the importance of teaching: "Teaching is the noblest profession in the world. Upon the proper education of youth depend the permanency and purity of home, the safety and

perpetuity of the nation. The parent gives the child an opportunity to live; the teacher enables the child to live well" (David O. McKay, *Gospel Ideals* [1953], 436).

May God bless us that we will be more determined to study and prepare and improve our abilities to be effective

teachers. Let us all remember that it is through inspired teaching that the gospel message is carried to the world. It is my humble prayer that we will all accept the challenge to teach our brothers and sisters the word of God in all diligence. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Joe J. Christensen

### Overcome greed and selfishness

They say the gospel is to comfort the afflicted and to afflict the comforted. My purpose today is to speak to the comforted: the rich, the poor, and all of us in between.

The Lord has said, "Wo unto you rich men, . . . for your riches will canker your souls." He has also said, "Wo unto you poor men, whose hearts are not broken, . . . [and] whose eyes are full of greediness."<sup>1</sup>

Many of you probably have heard this little prayer somebody wrote:

"Dear God,

"So far today I have done all right. I haven't gossiped, haven't lost my temper, haven't been greedy, grumpy, nasty, selfish, or overly indulgent. But in a few minutes, Lord, I am going to get out of bed, and from then on, I am probably going to need a lot more help."

When it comes to overcoming being greedy, selfish, and overly indulgent, we all need a lot more help. In his candid manner, President Brigham Young said: "The worst fear . . . I have about this people is that they will get rich in this country, forget God and His people, wax fat, and kick themselves out of the Church. . . . My greater fear . . . is that they cannot stand wealth."<sup>2</sup>

Our prosperity brings some real challenges because many are getting rich, more of us are waxing fat, and as a result of greed, selfishness, and overindulgence,

we could lose the Spirit and literally kick ourselves out of the Church.

### Materialism consuming our thoughts

Money and material things are on the minds of almost everyone. As Morris Chalfant wrote: "The great [question] of the twentieth century is[,] 'How can I acquire wealth?' No question occupies a larger place in the minds and . . . hearts of . . . people today than this. . . . This is true of men in every station and in every walk of life."<sup>3</sup>

Money in and of itself is not an evil, but as Paul taught Timothy, it is the *love* of money that is the root of all evil.<sup>4</sup> There are some of the wealthy who deal with their prosperity very well, using their resources to bless others and build the kingdom. For many, however, wealth presents major difficulties.

As we deal with the materialism that threatens us, here are four suggestions for each of us to consider.

### Wants are not needs

First, we should not confuse wants with needs.

My mother taught me an important lesson along these lines. For many years my father had a practice of trading for a new car every year. Then shortly after World War II when grain prices increased, we were surprised one day when Dad drove home in a more expensive car.

One morning my mother asked, "How much more did the new car cost than the other one?"

When Dad told her, my mother said, "Well, the other car has always been able to get me where I need to go. I think we ought to give the difference to someone who needs it more than we do."

And so it was. The next year Dad returned to the less-expensive cars, and they continued their generous ways.

If we are not careful, it is easy for our wants to become needs. Remember the line "There, there, little luxury, don't you cry. You'll be a necessity by and by."

### **Avoid spoiling children**

Second, we should avoid spoiling children by giving them too much.

In our day many children grow up with distorted values because we as parents overindulge them. Whether you are well-to-do or, like most of us, of more modest means, we as parents often attempt to provide children with almost everything they want, thus taking away from them the blessing of anticipating, of longing for something they do not have. One of the most important things we can teach our children is to deny themselves. Instant gratification generally makes for weak people. How many truly great individuals do you know who never had to struggle?

Elder Maxwell has voiced this concern when he said: "A few of our wonderful youth and young adults in the Church are unstretched. They have almost a free pass. Perks are provided, including cars complete with fuel and insurance—all paid for by parents who sometimes listen in vain for a few courteous and appreciative words. What is thus taken for granted . . . tends to underwrite selfishness and a sense of entitlement."<sup>5</sup>

A wise young mother said: "I choose not to give our children what I can afford to give them. I hold back for their sake."

In the words of Fred Gosman, "Children who always get what they want will want as long as they live."<sup>6</sup> And somewhere along the line it is important for the character development of our children to learn that "the earth still revolves around the sun" and not around them.<sup>7</sup> Rather, we should train our children to ask themselves the question, How is the world a better place because they are in it?

We live in a world of entertainment in full color with a lot of fast action, a world in which many children grow up thinking that if it isn't fun, it is boring and not worthwhile. Even in family activities we need to strike a balance between play and work. Some of my most memorable experiences while growing up centered around family activities: learning how to shingle a roof, build a fence, or working in the garden. Rather than being all work and no play, for many of our children it is almost all play and very little work.

As a consequence of overindulgence, many children leave homes ill-prepared to meet the real world. President Hinckley said: "Of course, we need to earn a living. The Lord told Adam that in the sweat of his face should he eat bread all the days of his life. It is important that we qualify ourselves to be self-reliant, particularly that every young man at the time of marriage be ready and able to assume the responsibilities of providing for his companion and for the children who may come to that home."<sup>8</sup>

All too many enter marriage who have never learned to cook, sew, or develop other important life skills. Ignorance of these needed skills, along with the lack of understanding of the management of money, sow the seeds for many failures in our children's marriages.

I fear that in many cases we are rearing children who are slaves to expensive fads and fashions. Remember the scripture "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."<sup>9</sup> How do we

determine where our treasure is? To do so, we need to evaluate the amount of time, money, and thought we devote to something. Might it not be well to evaluate how much focus we place on shopping and spending?

This does not mean that our children should not dress in some of the appropriate clothing that is in fashion because that can be very important to them. But they don't need a closet full. As members of the Church, we have a responsibility to present ourselves in a well-groomed, attractive, and modest manner. With good planning this can be done without being driven to spend extravagantly on our clothing.

More than 10 times the prophets in the Book of Mormon warn us about the problems of pride related to the nature of our clothing. Here is one example of them: "And it came to pass . . . that the people of the church began to wax proud, because of their exceeding riches, and their fine silks, and their fine-twined linen. . . . In all these things were they lifted up in the pride of their eyes, for they began to wear very costly apparel."<sup>10</sup>

We would do well if in all these areas of material things we and our children would follow the oft-quoted motto of our pioneer forebears to "fix it up, wear it out, make it do, or do without."

### **Live modestly and avoid debt**

Third, as we have heard so often, live modestly and avoid debt as if it were a plague.

President Hinckley recently reminded us of President Heber J. Grant's statement: "'If there is any one thing that will bring peace and contentment into the human heart, and into the family, it is to live within our means. And if there is any one thing that is grinding and discouraging and disheartening, it is to have debts and obligations that one cannot meet.' (*Gospel Standards*, comp. G. Homer Durham [1941], 111)."<sup>11</sup>

Samuel Johnson said, "Do not accustom yourself to consider debt as an inconvenience, you will find it [to be] a calamity."

How much house do we really need to accommodate our family comfortably? We should not endanger ourselves either spiritually or economically by acquiring homes which are ostentatious, feed our vanity, and go far beyond our needs.

If we are to be self-reliant and in a position to share, obviously we must acquire some resources. If we live within our means and avoid debt, resources can be accumulated. There are those with average incomes who, over a lifetime, do amass some means, and there are those who receive large salaries who do not. What is the difference? It is simply spending less than they receive, saving along the way, and taking advantage of the power of compound interest.

Financial consultants indicate that "most people have it all wrong about wealth. . . . Wealth is not the same as income. If you make a good income each year and spend it all, you are not getting wealthier. You are just living high. Wealth is what you accumulate, not what you spend."<sup>12</sup>

### **Give generously to others**

Finally, be generous in giving and sharing with others.

The more our hearts and minds are turned to assisting others less fortunate than we, the more we will avoid the spiritually cankerous effects that result from greed, selfishness, and overindulgence. Our resources are a stewardship, not our possessions. I am confident that we will literally be called upon to make an accounting before God concerning how we have used them to bless lives and build the kingdom.

The prophet Jacob provides us with some excellent counsel about how riches

can be acquired and for what they should be used:

"But before ye seek for riches, seek ye for the kingdom of God.

"And after ye have obtained a hope in Christ ye shall obtain riches, if ye seek them . . . for the intent to do good—to clothe the naked, and to feed the hungry, and to liberate the captive, and administer relief to the sick and the afflicted."<sup>13</sup>

In addition to paying an honest tithing, we should be generous in assisting the poor. How much should we give? I appreciate the thought of C. S. Lewis on this subject. He said: "I am afraid the only safe rule is to give more than we can spare. . . . If our charities do not at all pinch or hamper us, . . . they are too small. There ought to be things we should like to do and cannot do because our charitable expenditure excludes them."<sup>14</sup>

There are many worthy individuals and causes to which we might contribute. We should give generously to the fast offering and humanitarian funds of the Church. And if we desire our families to live lives of depth and meaning, we must have the courage to examine honestly where our treasures lie and avoid the pitfalls that result from greed, selfishness, and overindulgence.

Let us each remember:

- First: Not to confuse wants with needs.
- Second: Avoid spoiling our children.
- Third: Live modestly and avoid debt.
- Fourth: Be generous in giving to others.

Giving really is at the heart of our faith. At this Easter time, we again commemorate that "God [our Heavenly Father] so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son,"<sup>15</sup> who came to the earth and could have possessed any material thing but rather chose to give to all of us an example of a simple life free

from any shade of greed, selfishness, or overindulgence. May we strive daily to live more like He lived, the ultimate example of a life of depth and meaning.

I testify that Jesus is the Christ, this is His Church led by living prophets, and His tomb was literally empty on that third day. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 56:16–17.
2. Reported in James S. Brown, *Life of a Pioneer* (1900), 122–23; see also Preston Nibley, *Brigham Young: The Man and His Work* (1936), 128.
3. Morris Chalfant, "The Sin of the Church," *Wesleyan Methodist*, quoted by John H. Vandenberg in Conference Report, Oct. 1965, 131; or *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1965, 1154.
4. See 1 Timothy 6:10.
5. BYU devotional, 12 Jan. 1999.
6. *Spoiled Rotten: American Children and How to Change Them* (1992), 37.
7. *Spoiled Rotten*, inside front cover, 11.
8. "Thou Shalt Not Covet," *Ensign*, Mar. 1990, 2.
9. Matthew 6:21.
10. Alma 4:6.
11. In Conference Report, Oct. 1998, 71; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 53.
12. Thomas J. Stanley and William D. Danko, *The Millionaire Next Door* (1996), 1.
13. Jacob 2:18–19.
14. *Mere Christianity* (1952), 67.
15. John 3:16.

## President Hinckley

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has spoken to us, followed by Elder Joe J. Christensen of the Presidency of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will now sing "Come, Come, Ye Saints." Following the singing, Sister Carol B. Thomas, first counselor in the Young Women

general presidency, will address us. She will be followed by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Twelve.

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The chorus and congregation sang "Come, Come, Ye Saints."

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## Sister Carol B. Thomas

### Temples bless members' lives

Brothers and sisters, I *think* I am happy to be here today.

My assignment with the Young Women presidency puts me in many happy situations. One month ago a training assignment took me to Guayaquil, Ecuador. I arrived at the hotel after dark. The next morning I opened my curtains, and there across the valley was a beautiful granite building standing majestically on the Santa Ana Hills. Its stunning beauty was evident, but it wasn't until I saw the angel Moroni on top that I, with tears in my eyes, realized that here was a temple, a symbol of the glorious blessings that will come to the members of the Church in that part of the world.

"Temples are unique among all buildings. . . . They are places of covenants and promises. At their altars we kneel before God our Creator and are given promise of his everlasting blessings" (Gordon B. Hinckley, *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* [1997], 632-33). Wherever we went, we found that temples are being built, temples that will lift the Saints of God and change the face of countries, whether in South America or throughout the world.

Has it only been one year since our beloved prophet announced the building of 32 more temples? President Gordon B. Hinckley has said, "This is the greatest era of temple building in all the history of the world" (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley*, 629).

Our youngest son, Spencer, now serving a mission in Mongolia, wrote that his mission president was addressing

the missionaries and members concerning their duty in building up the Church there. "As President Cox opened the discussion for questions, the first response was, 'When is Mongolia going to have a temple?' These people," Spencer said, "are hungering for the gospel to play a greater part in their lives. They don't even have a Book of Mormon yet, and they want a temple."

Why all this fuss about temples? Simply put, the purpose of temples "is to redeem all mankind who are obedient to the laws and commandments of God. The gospel in its fulness was revealed to Adam. . . . [And] Saints of all ages have had temples in one form or another" (David B. Haight, in Conference Report, Apr. 1993, 29-30; or *Ensign*, May 1993, 23-24).

### Preparing families to attend the temple

Joseph Smith said, "The greatest responsibility in this world that God has laid upon us is to seek after our dead" (*History of the Church*, 6:313). If this is true, then as parents and family members our greatest challenge is to prepare our families for the temple. Parents have the primary responsibility, but grandparents, aunts and uncles, even brothers and sisters all may teach the family.

When my husband and I were married in the temple, we understood the importance of never discussing the temple outside the temple, not because the ceremonies were secret but because they were sacred. "They are kept confidential lest they be given to those who are unprepared" (Boyd K. Packer, *The Holy*



*Temple* [booklet, 1982], 2). But in a family setting, there are many precious truths that, with sensitivity and common sense, will help prepare our children for the temple.

Consider:

- *The sacred nature of the temple clothing.* In the temples all are dressed in white. White is the symbol of purity.

- *The temple is the Lord's classroom.* President Hinckley has said, "[The temple] becomes a school of instruction in the sweet and sacred things of God" (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley*, 635).

- *What it means to be worthy for the temple.* Can we teach our children that receiving one's endowment and the wearing of the sacred garment will not require a change of wardrobe or lifestyle if the principles of temple worthiness are understood and lived in their earlier years? A young woman who wears knee-length skirts will not have to buy a new wardrobe after she receives her endowment in the temple. A young man who anticipates going to the temple will respect the Church's moral standards in his social behavior.

- *Understanding gospel language.* What do the words *endowment*, *ordinances*, *sealings*, and *keys* really mean? The story is told of a little boy who overheard his parents discussing doing temple sealings. He asked, "Are you going to do the walls next week?"

## Teach children about the temple

Where may we teach our children? Family home evening is the formal setting, but there are so many more places where we may talk about our spiritual feelings for the temple. One of my favorite times was when my children were in bed at night. Occasionally I would lie on their bed and tell them of spiritual things. There in the peace and the quiet, the sweet Spirit can bear testimony to their heart and soul that the things you are saying are true.

We may assume that Joseph and Mary taught their family about the temple. As Elder Perry has discussed, when the Savior was a 12-year-old boy, His parents took Him to the Feast of the Passover in Jerusalem. When Jesus was left behind, He was not found in places or entertainments for a boy His age. His parents found Him in the temple. Perhaps when Mary tucked Him in bed at night, she shared her testimony of these sacred and precious truths.

My first memory of temples was when I was a little girl. I knew the temple must be a pretty wonderful place because my parents faithfully attended, and they always came home together in such a good mood. I understood the sacred nature of the temple clothing by the way my mother spoke about it with love and respect.

President Howard W. Hunter has said: "Let us share with our children the spiritual feelings we have in the temple. And let us teach them more earnestly and more comfortably the things we can appropriately say. . . . Keep a picture of a temple in your home that your children may see it" ("A Temple-Motivated People," *Ensign*, Feb. 1995, 5). I noticed every home I visited in Africa had a picture of a temple hung simply and beautifully on the wall.

## Attending the temple brings blessings

New understanding comes as we prepare our families for the temple. May I share a few things I have learned:

1. *Going to the temple often provides balance in our lives.* After returning home we have an increased sense of well-being; the influence of the Spirit can shield us from the frustrations of the world. Listen to this promise by President Hinckley: "If there were more temple work done in the Church, there would be less . . . selfishness, less . . . contention, less . . . demeaning [of] others. The whole Church would increasingly be

lifted to greater heights of spirituality, love for one another, and obedience to the commandments of God" (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley*, 622).

2. *The spiritual atmosphere of the temple curbs our appetite for worldly things.* When we attend frequently, we no longer have such a need to wear the latest fashion, and we are not so easily drawn to the entertainment of the world.

3. *The temple is a place of revelation.* Many years ago I was walking into the temple, and in my mind I heard the words, *Learn public speaking.* I thought to myself, *When will I ever have need for public speaking?* Over several months' period of time I tried very inadequately to conjure up some enthusiasm to obey the prompting I had received. I even checked out a tape from the local library by a public speaker who admitted that his goal was to someday speak in the Mormon Tabernacle. I thought at the time, *I'll never be speaking in the Tabernacle!*

Elder John A. Widtsoe has said, "At the most unexpected moments, in or out of the temple will come to [us], as a revelation, the solution of the problems that vex [our lives]. . . . It is a place where revelations may be expected" ("*Temple Worship*," *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine*, Apr. 1921, 63-64).

4. *One of the biggest lessons I have learned is that Satan will try to keep us from going to the temple.* During a discussion with friends once, they shared with me that whenever they attend, they don't tell anybody they are going. They just jump into their cars and go because if they don't, something is sure to happen to keep them away.

I remember reading of a warning given by the president of the Logan Temple that Satan's followers will "whisper in the ears of the people persuading them not to go to the Temple" ("*Genealogical Department*," *Church News*, 12 Dec. 1936, 8). "Temple work brings so much resistance because it is the source of so much

spiritual power to the Latter-day Saints" (Boyd K. Packer, "The Holy Temple," *Ensign*, Feb. 1995, 36).

5. *The Spirit of Elijah is brooding in the land.* As we work with youth of the Church, we see they are being drawn to their temples.

In Nicaragua, Central America, a group of 49 young women and their leaders took 2,000 names to the Guatemala City Temple. It took each girl a year to save enough money to go. These faithful young women rode a bus almost two days' journey through three country borders and spent two or three days at the temple before returning home.

In another ward, young people have located the names of 10,000 ancestors as they have turned their hearts to their families. Where temples are available, we see youth doing baptisms for the dead, sometimes on an individual weekly basis.

6. *In the temple the Spirit of the Lord provides comfort and peace, especially during moments of despair.* Recently I met a 35-year-old woman in the temple. As we visited, I asked if her husband was with her. With a look of tenderness in her eyes, she shared with me that he had died of a brain tumor three months ago. The temple is her anchor; the Spirit found in the temple gives her comfort and peace, and perhaps her husband was there.

### **Attend as often as circumstances allow**

Each of us may ask ourselves, "How often should I attend the temple?" Our leaders will never tell us how often we should attend because it is different for every person. Many women of various ages who live close to a temple try to go once a week. When one of my friends worked full time, she spent one day a month in the temple, attending several sessions. These women are obedient, but they also understand the strength of priesthood power that comes into their lives.

For young parents, attending the temple may be a once-a-month date. President Packer has said: "Perhaps you will understand . . . we are trying to establish family history as . . . a 'cottage industry.' . . . Couples raising little children should not feel inadequate or guilty . . . if they cannot afford the time or money to attend a distant temple frequently. Mother makes a contribution by noting important events, collecting pictures, bits of memorabilia, . . . all as it fits into the schedule of a busy mother" ("A Plea to Stake Presidents," leadership training meeting, 1 Apr. 1988, 5).

### **Emphasize the temple**

My own mother didn't do scrapbooks, but she gave me a love for my heritage. She told me story after story about my ancestors as she taught me to love them.

President Packer continues: "Father and mother can speak of ordinances and

covenants. By the inflection of their voices, they can italicize the word 'temple' every time they say it. . . . In proper season, family obligations will be a bit less and income a bit more. Then members can and should give more to this sacred [temple] work" ("A Plea to Stake Presidents," 5).

We plead with you mothers and fathers to teach your sons and daughters the meaning of the temple covenants. Teach them that "wearing the garment is [a] sacred privilege. . . . [It] is an outward expression of an inner commitment to follow the Savior Jesus Christ" (First Presidency letter, 5 Nov. 1996, 2).

Brothers and sisters, as servants of the living God, we shall press forward in this sacred temple work. May we teach our children that as they spiritually prepare themselves for the temple, they may stand in the presence of the Lord, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## **Elder Jeffrey R. Holland**

### **Gratitude to God the Father**

On this Easter weekend I wish to thank not only the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ but also His true Father, our spiritual Father and God, who, by accepting the sacrifice of His firstborn, perfect Son, blessed all of His children in those hours of atonement and redemption. Never more than at Easter time is there so much meaning in that declaration from the book of John which praises the Father as well as the Son: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."<sup>1</sup>

I am a father, inadequate to be sure, but I cannot comprehend the burden it must have been for God in His heaven to

witness the deep suffering and Crucifixion of His Beloved Son in such a manner. His every impulse and instinct must have been to stop it, to send angels to intervene—but He did not intervene. He endured what He saw because it was the only way that a saving, vicarious payment could be made for the sins of all His other children, from Adam and Eve to the end of the world. I am eternally grateful for a perfect Father and His perfect Son, neither of whom shrank from the bitter cup nor forsook the rest of us who are imperfect, who fall short and stumble, who too often miss the mark.

### **Jesus' relationship with His Father**

In considering such beauty of the "at-one-ment" in that first Easter season,

we are reminded that this relationship between Christ and His Father is one of the sweetest and most moving themes running through the Savior's ministry. Jesus' entire being, His complete purpose and delight, were centered in pleasing His Father and obeying His will. Of Him He seemed always to be thinking; to Him He seemed always to be praying. Unlike us, He needed no crisis, no discouraging shift in events to direct His hopes heavenward. He was already instinctively, longingly looking that way.

In all His mortal ministry Christ seems never to have had a single moment of vanity or self-interest. When one young man tried to call Him "good," He deflected the compliment, saying only one was deserving of such praise—His Father.

In the early days of His ministry He said humbly, "I can of mine own self do nothing: . . . I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me."<sup>2</sup>

Following His teachings, which stunned the audience with their power and authority, He would say: "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. . . . I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true."<sup>3</sup> Later He would say again, "I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak."<sup>4</sup>

To those who wanted to see the Father, to hear from God directly that Jesus was what He said He was, He answered: "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also. . . . He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."<sup>5</sup> When Jesus wanted to preserve unity among His disciples, He prayed using the example of His own relationship with God: "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are [one]."<sup>6</sup>

Even as He moved toward the Crucifixion, He restrained His Apostles who

would have intervened, by saying, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"<sup>7</sup> When that unspeakable ordeal was finished, He uttered what must have been the most peaceful and deserved words of His mortal ministry. At the end of His agony, He whispered, "It is finished. . . . Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."<sup>8</sup> Finally it was over. Finally He could go home.

I confess that I have reflected at length upon that moment and the Resurrection, which was shortly to follow it. I have wondered what that reunion must have been like: the Father that loved this Son so much, the Son that honored and revered His Father in every word and deed. For two who were one as these two were one, what must that embrace have been like? What must that divine companionship be yet? We can only wonder and admire. And we can, on an Easter weekend, yearn to live worthily of some portion of that relationship ourselves.

### **Strengthen relationships with children**

As a father, I wonder if I and all other fathers could do more to build a sweeter, stronger relationship with our sons and daughters here on earth. Dads, is it too bold to hope that our children might have some small portion of the feeling for us that the Divine Son felt for His Father? Might we earn more of that love by trying to be more of what God was to His child? In any case, we do know that a young person's developing concept of God centers on characteristics observed in that child's earthly parents.<sup>9</sup>

### **Absence of fathers damages children**

For that reason and many others, I suppose no book I have read in recent months has alarmed me more than a work entitled *Fatherless America*. In this study the author speaks of "fatherless-

ness" as "the most harmful demographic trend of this generation," the leading cause of damage to children. It is, he is convinced, the engine driving our most urgent social problems, from poverty to crime to adolescent pregnancy to child abuse to domestic violence. Among the principal social issues of our time is the flight of fathers from their children's lives.<sup>10</sup>

Of even greater concern than the physical absenteeism of some fathers is the spiritually or emotionally absent father. These are fatherly sins of omission that are probably more destructive than sins of commission. Why are we not surprised that when 2,000 children of all ages and backgrounds were asked what they appreciated most about their fathers, they answered universally, "He spends time with me"?<sup>11</sup>

A young Laurel I met on a conference assignment not long ago wrote to me after our visit and said, "I wish my dad knew how much I need him spiritually and emotionally. I crave any kind comment, any warm personal gesture. I don't think he knows how much it would mean to me to have him take an active interest in what is going on in my life, to offer to give me a blessing, or just spend some time together. I know he worries that he won't do the right thing or won't say the words well. But just to have him try would mean more than he could ever know. I don't want to sound ungrateful because I know he loves me. He sent me a note once and signed it 'Love, Dad.' I treasure that note. I hold it among my dearest possessions."<sup>12</sup>

### **Most fathers are wonderful**

Well, as with that young woman, I don't want this talk to sound ungrateful, nor is it meant to make fathers feel they have fallen short. Most fathers are wonderful. Most dads are terrific. I don't know who wrote these little storybook

verses remembered from my youth, but they go something like this:

Only a dad with a tired face,  
Coming home from the daily race, . . .  
Toiling and striving from day to day,  
Facing whatever may come his way,

...  
Glad in his heart that his own rejoice  
To see him come home and to hear  
his voice. . . .

Only a dad, but he gives his all,  
[Smoothing] the way for his children  
small,

Doing with courage [so] stern and  
grim

The deeds that his father did for him.  
These are the lines that for him I pen:  
Only a dad, but the best of men.<sup>13</sup>

### **Follow God's example of fatherhood**

And, brethren, even when we are not "the best of men," even in our limitations and inadequacy, we can keep making our way in the right direction because of the encouraging teachings set forth by a Divine Father and demonstrated by a Divine Son. With a Heavenly Father's help we can leave more of a parental legacy than we suppose.

One new father wrote: "Often as I watch my son watch me, I am taken back to moments with my own dad, remembering how vividly I wanted to be just like him. I remember having a plastic razor and my own can of foaming cream, and each morning I would shave when he shaved. I remember following his footsteps back and forth across the grass as he mowed the lawn in summer.

"Now I want my son to follow my lead, and yet it terrifies me to know he probably will. Holding this little boy in my arms, I feel a 'heavenly homesickness,' a longing to love the way God loves, to comfort the way He comforts, to protect the way He protects. The answer to all the fears of my youth was always

‘What would Dad do?’ Now that I have a child to raise I am counting on a Heavenly Father to tell me exactly that.”<sup>14</sup>

### **Influence of a father’s love**

A friend from college days wrote to me recently, saying: “Much in my chaotic childhood was uncertain, but one thing I knew for sure: that my dad loved me. That certainty was the anchor of my young life. I came to know and love the Lord because my father loved him. I have never called anyone a fool or taken the Lord’s name in vain because he told me the Bible said I shouldn’t. I have always paid my tithing because he taught me it was a privilege to do so. I have always tried to take responsibility for my mistakes because my father did. Even though he was estranged from the Church for a [time], at the end of his life he served a mission and worked faithfully in the temple. In his will he said that any money left over from taking care of his [family] should go to the Church. He loved the Church with all of his heart. And because of him, so do I.”<sup>15</sup>

Surely that must be the spiritual application of Lord Byron’s couplet: “Yet in my lineaments they trace / Some features of my father’s face.”<sup>16</sup>

### **Scriptural examples of a father’s impact**

At a vulnerable moment in young Nephi’s life, his prophetic future was determined when he said, “I did believe all the words which had been spoken by my father.”<sup>17</sup> At the turning point of the prophet Enos’s life, he said it was “the words which I had often heard my father speak”<sup>18</sup> which prompted one of the great revelations recorded in the Book of Mormon. And sorrowing Alma the Younger, when confronted by the excruciating memory of his sins, “remembered also to have heard [his] father prophesy . . . concerning the coming of . . . Jesus Christ, a Son of God, to atone for

the sins of the world.”<sup>19</sup> That brief memory, that personal testimony offered by his father at a time when the father may have felt nothing was sinking in, not only saved the spiritual life of this, his son, but changed forever the history of the Book of Mormon people.

Of Abraham, the grand patriarch, God said, “*I know him. . . . He will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord.*”<sup>20</sup>

I bear my witness this Easter weekend that “great things [will] be required at the hand[s] of [the] fathers,” as the Lord declared to the Prophet Joseph Smith.<sup>21</sup> Surely the greatest of those things will be to have done all they could for the happiness and spiritual safety of the children they are to nurture.

In that most burdensome moment of all human history, with blood appearing at every pore and an anguished cry upon His lips, Christ sought Him whom He had always sought—His Father. “Abba,” He cried, “Papa,” or from the lips of a younger child, “Daddy.”<sup>22</sup>

This is such a personal moment it almost seems a sacrilege to cite it. A Son in unrelieved pain, a Father His only true source of strength, both of them staying the course, making it through the night—together.

Fathers, this Easter weekend may we be renewed in our task as parents, bolstered by images of this Father and this Son as we embrace our children and stand with them forever, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. John 3:16.
2. John 5:30.
3. John 7:16, 28.
4. John 12:49.
5. John 14:7, 9.
6. John 17:11.
7. John 18:11.
8. John 19:30; Luke 23:46.

9. See "Parent-Child Relationships and Children's Images of God," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Mar. 1997, 25-43.
10. David Blankenhorn, *Fatherless America: Confronting Our Most Urgent Social Problem* (1995), 1.
11. See "Becoming a Better Father," *Ensign*, Jan. 1983, 27.
12. Personal correspondence.
13. Edgar A. Guest, "Only a Dad," in *Best-Loved Poems of the LDS People*, ed. Jack M. Lyon and others (1996), 90-91.
14. Personal correspondence.
15. Personal correspondence from Robert A. Rees.
16. *Parisina*, stanza 13, lines 285-86.
17. 1 Nephi 2:16.
18. Enos 1:3.
19. Alma 36:17.
20. Genesis 18:19; italics added.
21. Doctrine and Covenants 29:48.
22. Mark 14:36.

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The chorus sang "The Lord Is My Shepherd."

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### President Hinckley

Sister Carol Thomas of the Young Women presidency and Elder Jeffrey Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve have spoken to us, with the chorus singing "The Lord Is My Shepherd."

We are grateful to the Bonneville International LDS Radio Network and the owners and operators of many television and radio stations and cable systems for offering their facilities as a public service in carrying this conference to the world.

We express deep appreciation to the Mormon Youth Chorus for the beautiful music they have given and to Brother Bowden particularly for what may be his final presentation in this capacity. He has done a tremendous work, and we are so deeply grateful to him.

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our next speaker and final speaker, following which the choir will sing "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today." The benediction will be given by Elder Carl B. Pratt of the Seventy, following which the conference will be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

## President James E. Faust

My dear brothers, sisters, and friends, I earnestly seek the influence of the Spirit during the few moments that I stand at this pulpit. I pray for guidance and wisdom so that what I say may be acceptable to our Heavenly Father.

### People have looked to our day

Brethren and sisters, ours is the time of which the Prophet Joseph Smith spoke, "upon which prophets, priests and kings [in ages past] have dwelt with peculiar delight; [and] have looked forward with joyful anticipation to the day in which we live; and fired with heavenly and joyful

anticipations they have sung and written and prophesied of this our day; . . . we are the favored people that God has [chosen] to bring about the Latter-day glory."<sup>1</sup> Since the Prophet Joseph said this in 1842, men have acquired more knowledge than in all of the time before his ministry.

### The two greatest historical events

We stand on the brink of the next century. From this vantage point, we need to remember that the most significant events in the last 2,000 years were not the marvels of science, technology,

and travel. They were the Savior's Atonement and the Restoration of the gospel with the priesthood keys and authority. These two singular events will continue to be of transcendent importance to mankind as we move forward in time. The past, present, and future pivot on these marvelous divine interventions.

### **Secular knowledge helps the Lord's work**

On January 1, 1901, in this very building, the First Presidency greeted the world as follows:

"A new century dawns upon the world today. The hundred years just completed were the most momentous in the history of man upon this planet. It would be impossible in a hundred days to make even a brief summary of the notable events, the marvelous developments, the grand achievements and the beneficial inventions and discoveries, which mark the progress of the ten decades now left behind in the ceaseless march of humanity. The very mention of the nineteenth century suggested advancement, improvement, liberty and light. Happy are we to have lived amidst its wonders and shared in the riches of its treasures of intelligence!"<sup>2</sup>

When this statement was made 100 years ago, people still traveled by horse and buggy. The age of the telephone and electricity was just dawning. There was no air travel, no e-mail, no fax machines, no Internet. There has been an explosion of secular knowledge. I believe that God has opened up these treasures of intelligence to enhance His purposes on the earth. The new century will bring exponential advances in that treasury.

### **Prepare spiritually for the future**

My message today is about preparing ourselves for the future. This is our time, and it involves more than just looking at the clock. Some of us are watching our

clocks quite anxiously as they tick their way inexorably into the next century. Our awareness of time affects how we think and act. This is illustrated by the story about the clock in a restaurant window. It "had stopped a few minutes past noon. One day a friend asked the owner if he knew the clock was not running. 'Yes,' replied the restaurant man, 'but you would be surprised to know how many people look at that clock, think they are hungry, and come in to get something to eat.'"<sup>3</sup>

If only there were some kind of divine timepiece that would arouse a spiritual hunger in people! What are most people hungry for? I believe it is spiritual and moral leadership. Increases in technology, scientific inventions, and medical miracles have been marvelous and incredible. But we must use them properly to bring us joy, and that requires spiritual and moral leadership. Civilization has been around for a long time. While computers are a great convenience and wonderfully helpful in reducing drudgery, we are reminded that the Nephites "lived after the manner of happiness"<sup>4</sup> even without computers. Electronic marvels can actually bring some pitfalls. For example, surfing the Internet may draw us into that which, if pursued, can destroy our marriages, our homes, and even our lives.

### **Fear the breakdown of morals, not Y2K**

Today many people are obsessed with the Y2K problem and worry about the date coming up right because of the way computers measure time. As someone once said about time: "[It] changes with time: in youth, time marches on; in middle age, time flies; and in old age, time runs out."<sup>5</sup> We have come to rely on electronics for much of our daily work, and we are naturally concerned about the need to reprogram computers to move into the next century. While some



glitches may occur, I am optimistic that no great catastrophic computer breakdown will disrupt society as we move into the next century. I have a far greater fear of the disruption of the traditional values of society.

Indeed, I am more concerned about the failure of our moral computers of honesty, integrity, decency, civility, and sexual purity. How many people today are truly incorruptible? So many get caught up in waves of popular issues and tides of rhetoric. This breakdown of moral values is happening because we are separating the teachings of God from personal conduct. An honorable man or woman will personally commit to live up to certain self-imposed expectations, with no need of an outside check or control. I would hope that we can load our moral computers with three elements of integrity: dealing justly with oneself, dealing justly with others, and recognizing the law of the harvest.

### **Face the future with the Savior**

I also hope our personal worship of the Savior will remain uncomplicated so that the simple majesty of gospel truth can work to bring us peace. We must keep our faith simple and our worship pure. Religion is more than a ritual; it is righteousness.

I have no doubt that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as an institution can meet the challenge of entering into the year 2000. Growth in membership, the number of new temples, and the inspired organization are all in place to move with strength into the next century. Having the images of technology in our minds is commendable, but in order to move forward spiritually we need to have the Savior's image in our countenances<sup>6</sup> and in our hearts.

As the milestone year 2000 approaches, excitement abounds because we enter not only into a new century but

also the third thousand years since the birth of Jesus Christ, the Savior and Redeemer of the World. This solitary figure, Jesus of Nazareth, without position or status or wealth, changed the world. So far as we know, during His life He owned no land nor any worldly things except the simple clothes He wore.

His message was also simple: "Peace be to this house."<sup>7</sup> "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."<sup>8</sup> "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."<sup>9</sup> With these and other simple principles, He introduced a new way of life. He taught of love, the doctrines of hope and salvation, the pathway for peace in this world and the world to come. He spoke of the Resurrection, when spiritual darkness would be removed and the bright light and hope of eternal life given to all mankind.

Following His ascension into heaven, Peter, James, and John and the other unlettered Apostles and Seventy became men of steel as they carried this enlightened message to the world. With their primitive means of travel and communication, this small missionary band went forward boldly with this new message of hope. They did a majestic work in carrying the inspired doctrines of Christ far and wide.

### **Technology aids mission of the Church**

Advances in travel and communication have helped the institutional Church move forward at a rapid pace in proclaiming the gospel. Media referrals are introducing our missionaries to more investigators. Church-produced videos help the missionaries explain the gospel message and the mission of the Church. But are we as individuals doing our part to move this holy work forward? Today the information highway, with all of its means of communication, affords an opportunity for us to carry the mission with

a thousandfold greater speed and ease than Peter, James, and John and the other intrepid disciples. Thousands of messengers, their feet shod with the gospel of peace, now go forth with the message of God.

Technology provides significant support to the ongoing mission of the Church. In the late 1950s, as the jet age began, President David O. McKay boarded a jet after dedicating the temple in New Zealand. As he arrived in Los Angeles, he said to Elder Henry D. Taylor and others, "Brethren, next Thursday when the First Presidency and Council of the Twelve meet, I am going to recommend that a stake be organized in New Zealand." He then said, "With these fast planes it will be possible for the General Authorities to travel swiftly to any part of the world, to visit stakes as they are organized."<sup>10</sup> We now have hundreds of stakes outside of the United States.

Advances in communication and travel during this last century have hastened the pace at which the word of the Lord goes out from Zion.<sup>11</sup> I feel much like Isaiah, who spoke of our time, when "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."<sup>12</sup> I believe that this marvelous outpouring of knowledge has heightened our ability to take the Lord's saving message to the world, "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations."<sup>13</sup>

### **Deeper, daily worship necessary**

As we approach the year 2000, the pressure of mastering the wonders of technology becomes more and more challenging. In this pursuit we could become technologically wise but spiritually illiterate. Undoubtedly, education unlocks the doors of the future for us. But we should be sure that our computers of faith are working so that we can constantly remain on the course of rig-

teousness. We can do this with daily prayer, scripture reading, family home evenings, and keeping our covenants and ordinances on a daily basis. Our worship needs to go deeper than the outward symbols, embracing the simple, profound principles of human conduct embodied in the Savior's teachings: "Repent and [turn] unto me with full purpose of heart."<sup>14</sup> We should in faith "become as [little children] and be baptized in [His] name."<sup>15</sup> The Savior's injunction to us is, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them who despitefully use you and persecute you."<sup>16</sup>

The most difficult of all challenges given to us is, "I would that ye should be perfect even as I, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect."<sup>17</sup> Perfection is an eternal goal. While we cannot be perfect in mortality, striving for it is a commandment which ultimately, through the Atonement, we can keep.

Remember, the marvels of modern science and technology will not exalt us. Indeed, the great challenge we face as we prepare for the future is to be more spiritually enlightened. All of this new, expanding intellectual property must certainly be mastered through great effort and learning. But technical savvy is not fully useful unless there is a spiritual purpose and meaning to it. I am certain the Lord expects us to apply it to the advancement of His purposes and the blessing of mankind, but we must adopt those lofty ideals as personal goals and desires before we can direct technology to those purposes.

### **Follow Church leaders, love others**

As we approach the beginning of the third thousand years since the Savior's birth, how should the 10 million of us who have been baptized in His name carry on His work? We can do this by following the direction set by President

Hinckley, the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve, and the other General Authorities. Much of our work ought to focus on changing our own lives and thinking. It should encompass what the Savior called the new commandment: "That ye love one another."<sup>18</sup> To all of us, the feeding of His sheep is a continuing responsibility.<sup>19</sup>

### Greater knowledge, blessings in future

As the Prophet Joseph indicated, this is our day and time. I believe the future holds greater blessings for mankind than ever before. I rejoice in this great outpouring of spiritual knowledge, when "the earth [is being] filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."<sup>20</sup> Knowledge and intelligence are dropping "as the gentle rain from heaven"<sup>21</sup> to bless all of our lives. We should seize every opportunity to move forward in faith, looking beyond the year 2000 into a future bright with hope, acknowledging that all good gifts come by divine providence. With such increased knowledge comes a higher responsibility. If we work hard, wisely manage our personal stewardships, and live providently, the Lord will prosper us in our use of this heightened knowledge to advance His holy work.

President Gordon B. Hinckley is the prophet for our day and time. He is keenly aware of this higher responsibility and is energetically doing all he can to bring about God's purposes on earth. Each of us needs to do all we can to help move this work forward. As the Psalmist said, "This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes."<sup>22</sup> I have a conviction of this and so testify in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. *History of the Church*, 4:609-10.
2. In James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. (1965-75), 3:333.
3. In Jacob M. Braude, comp., *Braude's Treasury of Wit and Humor* (1964), 178.
4. 2 Nephi 5:27.
5. Evan Esar, comp., *20,000 Quips and Quotes* (1995), 812.
6. See Alma 5:14.
7. Luke 10:5.
8. Matthew 22:37.
9. Matthew 22:39.
10. Henry D. Taylor, in Conference Report, Apr. 1960, 118-19.
11. See Micah 4:2.
12. Isaiah 11:9.
13. Luke 24:47.
14. 3 Nephi 10:6.
15. 3 Nephi 11:37.
16. 3 Nephi 12:44.
17. 3 Nephi 12:48.
18. John 13:34.
19. See John 21:15-17.
20. Habakkuk 2:14.
21. William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, act 4, scene 1, line 184; see also Deuteronomy 32:2.
22. Psalm 118:23.

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The chorus sang "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today."

Elder Carl B. Pratt offered the benediction.

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## SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second session of the 169th Annual General Conference convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 3, 1999, at 2:00 P.M. President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The music was provided by a combined choir from Ricks College, under the direction of Brothers Kevin Brower and Clyde Luke, with Sister Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

President Faust made the following remarks as the meeting began.

### President James E. Faust

My beloved brothers and sisters, we welcome you to this, the second general session of the 169th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Faust, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance or who are participating by means of television, cable, or radio and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be by a combined choir from Ricks College, under the direction of Kevin Brower and

Clyde Luke, with Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

We shall begin with the choir singing "Hark, All Ye Nations!" Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Richard D. Allred of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "Hark, All Ye Nations!"

Elder Richard D. Allred offered the invocation.

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### President Faust

The choir will now sing "O Love That Glorifies the Son." President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will then present the General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for sustaining vote. Brother Ted E. Davis, chairman of the Church Audit Committee, will then read the report of the Church Audit Committee. He will be followed by Brother F. Michael Watson, secretary to the First Presidency, who will present the statistical report of the Church for the year 1998.

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The choir sang "O Love That Glorifies the Son."

## Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers

### President Thomas S. Monson

My brothers and sisters, President Hinckley has requested that I, Brother Monson, now present to you the General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain Gordon Bitner Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Thomas Spencer Monson as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and James Esdras Faust as Second Counselor in the

First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Those opposed, if any, may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Boyd Kenneth Packer as Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the following as members of that quorum: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the Counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor, please manifest it. Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

Those who can join with us in extending a vote of appreciation to Elders Adhemar Damiani, Ernani Teixeira, and Robert S. Wood for their service as Area Authority Seventies, please manifest it. Thank you.

It is proposed that we sustain Elders Adhemar Damiani, Stephen B. Oveson, David R. Stone, H. Bruce Stucki, Richard H. Winkel, and Robert S. Wood as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy. All who wish to join with us in doing so, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain Elders Benjamin De Hoyos, Steven E. Snow, and Pedro Jorge da Cruz Penha as Area Authority Seventies. All in favor, please manifest it. Thank you. Any opposed, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies as at present constituted. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may so manifest it.

It appears that the sustaining has been unanimous in the affirmative. Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your faith and your prayers.

We shall now ask the newly called members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy to take their places on the stand.

## Church Audit Committee Report for 1998

**Ted E. Davis**

The Church Audit Committee consists of three members who are independent of all Church officers, employees, departments, and Church-affiliated organizations. We report directly to the First Presidency and have access to all records and personnel necessary to perform our responsibilities.

The Church also has an auditing department that is independent of all other Church operations and departments. The Church Auditing Department is separate and independent from the Church Audit Committee. The Church Auditing Department's staff consists of certified

public accountants and other professionally qualified auditors. The department audits the various financial statements of the Church in accordance with recognized professional auditing standards. It also monitors contributions and expenditures of local ecclesiastical units.

The Church Audit Committee has reviewed the financial policies and procedures that provide controls over contributions and expenditures of Church funds and that safeguard assets of the Church. We have also reviewed budgeting, accounting and reporting, and auditing systems for the year ended 31 December 1998.

Expenditures of Church funds for 1998 were authorized by the Council on the Disposition of the Tithes according to written policies. The Council is composed of the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the Presiding Bishopric, as prescribed under revelation. Administration of approved budgets is controlled through the Budget Department under direction of the Appropriation and Budget Committees.

Church-affiliated organizations, including Deseret Trust Companies and Deseret Management Corporation and its subsidiaries, report to independent boards of directors, maintain their own accounting systems in accordance with accepted business practices, and report in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles. These organizations are audited by the Church Auditing

Department and/or independent public accounting firms. Brigham Young University and other institutions of higher education are also audited by independent public accounting firms.

Based on our review of financial, budgeting, and other control policies and procedures, and our review of all audit reports issued in 1998 and responses thereto, the Church Audit Committee is of the opinion that, in all material respects, Church contributions received and expended during the year ended 31 December 1998 have been managed in accordance with revelation and established Church policies and procedures.

Respectfully submitted,

Church Audit Committee  
Ted E. Davis, chairman  
Donald D. Salmon  
Frank M. McCord

## Church Statistical Report for 1998

### F. Michael Watson

Brothers and sisters, for the information of the members of the Church, the First Presidency has issued the following statistical report concerning the membership growth and status of the Church as of 31 December 1998. These statistics are based on 1998 reports available prior to this conference.

#### Church units

Stakes .....	2,505
Districts .....	631
Missions .....	331
Wards and branches .....	25,551

#### Church membership

Total membership .....	10,354,241
Increase in children of record during 1998 .....	76,829
Converts baptized during 1998 .....	299,134

#### Missionaries

Full-time missionaries .....	57,853
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#### Temples

Temples dedicated during 1998 .....	2
(Monticello Utah and Preston England Temples)	
Temples in operation .....	53

Temples announced, including  
 those under construction  
 at the end of 1998 . . . . . 45

### **Prominent members who have passed away since last April**

*Elder Dallas N. Archibald* of the First Quorum of the Seventy; *Sister June Dixon Oaks*, wife of Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; *Sister Ferne Gardner Hunter*, widow of Elder Milton R. Hunter, former member of the First Council of the Seventy; *Sister Norma Creer Harbertson*, wife of Elder Robert B.

Harbertson, former member of the Seventy; *Sister Margaret Romney Jackson Judd*, former counselor in the Young Women general presidency; *Leonard James Arrington*, former Church historian; *Glenn E. Nielson*, former member of the Church Finance Committee.

### **President Faust**

Our first speaker will be Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Elder Richard G. Scott, also of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

## **Elder Neal A. Maxwell**

### **Selfishness is self-destruction**

In one degree or another we all struggle with selfishness. Since it is so common, why worry about selfishness anyway? Because selfishness is really self-destruction in slow motion. No wonder the Prophet Joseph Smith urged, "Let every selfish feeling be not only buried, but annihilated" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 178). Hence annihilation—not moderation—is the destination!

Surging selfishness, for example, has shrunken some people into ciphers; they seek to erase their emptiness by sensations. But in the arithmetic of appetite, anything multiplied by zero still totals zero! Each spasm of selfishness narrows one's universe that much more by reducing his awareness of or concern with others. In spite of its outward, worldly swagger, such indulgent individualism is actually provincial, like goldfish in a bowl congratulating themselves on their self-sufficiency, never mind the food pellets or changes of water.

Long ago it took a Copernicus to tell a provincial world that this planet was not the center of the universe. Some selfish moderns need a Copernican reminder that they are not the center of the universe either!

### **Signs of selfishness**

The early and familiar forms of selfishness are: building up self at the expense of others, claiming or puffing credit, being glad when others go wrong, resenting the genuine successes of others, preferring public vindication to private reconciliation, and taking "advantage of one because of his words" (2 Nephi 28:8).

By focusing on himself, a selfish person finds it easier to bear false witness, to steal, and covet, since nothing should be denied him. No wonder it is so easy for governments to pander to the appetites of the natural man, especially if the trains continue to run on time, reassuring him all the while that his permissiveness is somehow permissible.

Selfishness likewise causes us to be discourteous, disdainful, and self-centered while withholding from others needed goods, praise, and recognition as we selfishly pass them by and notice them not (see Mormon 8:39). Later on come rudeness, brusqueness, and the further flexing of elbows.

In contrast to the path of selfishness, there is no room for road rage on the straight and narrow way. There will be no spouse or child abuse when there is unselfish love at home. Furthermore, unselfishness is best grown in the family garden, and, likewise, diligently performing seemingly ordinary Church duties can further help us to overcome selfishness. The unselfish are also more free. As G. K. Chesterton said, if we can be interested in others, even if they are not interested in us, we will find ourselves "under a freer sky [and] in a street full of splendid strangers" (*Orthodoxy* [1959], 21).

### Meekness cures selfishness

In daily discipleship, the many ways to express selfishness are matched by many ways to avoid it. Meekness is the real cure, for it does not merely mask selfishness but dissolves it! Smaller steps could include asking ourselves inwardly before undertaking an important action, *Whose needs am I really trying to meet?* Or in significant moments of self-expression, we can first count to 10. Such thoughtful filtering can multiply our offering by 10 as a mesh of reflective meekness filters out destructive and effusive ego.

We can also meekly let our ideas have a life of their own without oversponsoring them. Rather, let the Spirit impel our worthy ideas.

### Selfishness accelerates cultural decline

Alas, gross, individual selfishness is finally acculturated. Then societies can

eventually become without order, without mercy, without love, perverted, and past feeling (see Moroni 9). Society thereby reflects a grim, cumulative tally which signals a major cultural decline. This happened anciently when a people actually became "weak, because of their transgression" (Helaman 4:26). Speaking behaviorally, when what was once the lesser voice of the people becomes more dominant, then the judgments of God and the consequences of foolish selfishness follow (see Mosiah 29:26–27).

Cultural decline is accelerated when single-interest segments of society become indifferent to general values once widely shared. This drift is facilitated by the indifferent or the indulgent as society is led carefully down to hell (see 2 Nephi 28:21). Some may not join in this drift, but instead they step aside, whereas once they might have constrained, as is their representative right. Of such circumstances Yeats lamented, "The best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity" (W. B. Yeats, "The Second Coming," lines 7–8).

Today in place of some traditionally shared values is a demanding conformity, pushed, ironically, by those who eventually will not tolerate those who once tolerated them. While incremental iniquity may not cause a huge decline all at once, the same somber direction is nevertheless continued, subtly and carefully, with no arousing jolts or jars (see 2 Nephi 28:21).

Such are some of the *proximate* consequences of selfishness, yet some of its consequences are *ultimate*—impacting us salvationally.

### Selfishness: cause of all cardinal sins

Selfishness is actually the detonator of all the cardinal sins. It is the hammer for the breaking of the Ten Commandments, whether by neglecting parents, the Sabbath, or by inducing false witness, murder, and envy. No wonder the selfish



individual is often willing to break a covenant in order to fix an appetite. No wonder those who will later comprise the celestial kingdom, after they have paid a price, were once unrepentant adulterers, whoremongers, and those who both loved and made lies.

Some of the selfish wrongly believe that there is no divine law anyway, so there is no sin (see 2 Nephi 2:13). Situational ethics are thus made to order for the selfish. So in the management of self, one can conquer by his genius and strength because there really is no crime whatsoever (see Alma 30:17).

### Selfishness distorts perception

Unsurprisingly, therefore, selfishness leads to terrible perceptual and behavioral blunders. For instance, Cain, corrupted by his seeking of power, said after slaying Abel, "I am free" (Moses 5:33; see also 6:15).

One of the worst consequences of severe selfishness, therefore, is this profound loss of proportionality, like straining at gnats while swallowing camels (see Matthew 23:24; see also Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 23:21, footnote 24a). Today there are, for example, those who strain over various gnats but swallow the practice of partial-birth abortions. Small wonder, therefore, that selfishness magnifies a mess of pottage into a banquet and makes 30 pieces of silver look like a treasure trove.

Developmentally, what transpires is like what happened to an ancient group of children "who did grow up . . . that they became for themselves"—hardened and errant (3 Nephi 1:29; see also v. 30). Devastating cultural change can and does happen "in the space of not many years," including replacing the much-needed spirit of community with a diversified alliance of dalliance (see Helaman 4:26).

Determined to walk in his own way, the natural man often persists to the

point where he is "past feeling," having been sedated by pleasing the carnal mind (see 1 Nephi 17:45; see also Ephesians 4:19). Sadly, like the drug addict, he is always in need of a fresh fix.

### Selfish people use others

The severely selfish *use* others but do not *love* them. Let the Uriahs of the world beware! (see 2 Samuel 11:3–17). Centuries before Christ, the prophet Jacob warned unchaste men, "Ye have broken the hearts of your tender wives, and lost the confidence of your children, because of your bad examples before them" (Jacob 2:35). When love waxes cold, let the poor and the needy beware too, for they will be neglected, as happened in ancient Sodom (see Matthew 24:12; see also Ezekiel 16:49). Strange as it seems, when severely selfish people are no longer little in their own sight, everybody else shrinks! (see 1 Samuel 15:17).

Even the early droplets of selfish decisions suggest a direction. Then the little inflecting rivulets come, merging into small brooks and soon into larger streams; finally one is swept along by a vast river which flows into the "gulf of misery and endless wo" (Helaman 5:12).

### Watch for societal selfishness

We actually have an obligation to notice genuine, telltale societal signs. It was Jesus who warned, "O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?" suggesting the need for a different kind of weather forecasting (Matthew 16:3).

For what happens in cultural decline both leaders and followers are really accountable. Historically, of course, it is easy to criticize bad leaders, but we should not give followers a free pass. Otherwise, in their rationalization of their degeneration they may say they were just following orders, while the

leader was just ordering followers! However, much more is required of followers in a democratic society, wherein individual character matters so much in both leaders and followers.

### Examples of unselfish leaders

The prophet Mormon unselfishly consented to lead a people who were in steep decline. He prayed for them, but confided that his prayers were without faith because of the people's wickedness (see Mormon 3:12). Other times a visionary leader, like Joseph in Egypt, lifts people out of the endangered routine they're in by preparing them for the specific challenges of the future (see Genesis 41:46–57). A few, like Lincoln, though in a political role, provide spiritual leadership as well. Lincoln, by the way, warned of how individuals of ambition and talents would continue to arise and that such an individual “thirsts and burns for distinction, and if possible . . . will have it, *whether at the expense of emancipating slaves or enslaving freemen*” (cited in John Wesley Hill, *Abraham Lincoln: Man of God* [1927], 74; italics in original).

Of unselfish George Washington it has been written: “In all history few men who possessed unassailable power have used that power so gently and self-effacingly for what their best instincts told them was the welfare of their neighbors and all mankind” (James Thomas

Flexner, *Washington: The Indispensable Man* [1974], xvi).

Power is most safe with those, like Washington, who are not in love with it! A narcissist society, in which each person is busy looking out for number one, can build neither brotherhood nor community. Aren't we glad in this Easter season and in all seasons that Jesus did not selfishly look out for number one?

No wonder we have been told, “Thou shalt have *no other gods before me*,” and this includes self-worship! (Exodus 20:3; italics added). One way or another, the grossly selfish will finally be shattered, whimpering, against the jagged, concrete consequences of their selfishness.

### A young girl's unselfish prayer

In contrast, as I close, consider unselfish Melissa Howes, whose comparatively young father died of cancer several months ago. Just before, Melissa, who was then nine, was voice in family prayer, pleading, “Heavenly Father, bless my daddy, and if you need him more than us, you can have him. We want him, but Thy will be done. And please help us not to be mad at you” (letter from Christie Howes, 25 Feb. 1998).

What spiritual submissiveness for one so young! What an unselfish understanding of the plan of salvation! May unselfish submissiveness be our path too, in the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen!

## Elder Richard G. Scott

### Eternal marriage is a blessing

One of the most beautiful, comforting doctrines of the Lord—one that brings immense peace, happiness, and unbounded joy—is that principle called eternal marriage. This doctrine means that a man and woman who love each

other deeply, who have grown together through the trials, joys, sorrows, and happiness of a shared lifetime can live beyond the veil together forever with their family who earn that blessing. That is not just an immensely satisfying dream; *it is a reality*. Any husband and wife who have shared the joys of marriage here on

earth would want that blessing. But only those who meet the requirements established by the Lord will receive that supernal gift. I bear witness that all those things that have and will bring me the greatest happiness in life have roots in the temple ordinances. Decide now to receive the ordinances of the temple at the appropriate time. Don't let anything overcome that resolve.

### **Prepare for temple ordinances**

If you are now ready to receive the ordinances of the temple, prepare carefully for that crowning event. Before entering the temple, you will be interviewed by your bishop and stake president for your temple recommend. Be honest and candid with them. That interview is not a test to be passed but an important step to confirm that you have the maturity and spirituality to receive the supernal ordinances and make and keep the edifying covenants offered in the house of the Lord. Personal worthiness is an essential requirement to enjoy the blessings of the temple. Anyone foolish enough to enter the temple unworthily will receive condemnation.

Worthy character is best forged from a life of consistent, correct choices centered in the teachings of the Master. For a moment I speak to you who are preparing for that sweet period of discovery known as courtship leading to eternal marriage. It can be a wondrously beautiful time of growth and sharing, a time when you should focus your thoughts, actions, and plans on two individuals: the parents of your own future children. Prepare to be a successful parent by being completely worthy in every thought and act during courtship.

### **Attributes to look for in a spouse**

There is more to a foundation of eternal marriage than a pretty face or an

attractive figure. There is more to consider than popularity or charisma. As you seek an eternal companion, look for someone who is developing the essential attributes that bring happiness: a deep love of the Lord and of His commandments, a determination to live them, one that is kindly understanding, forgiving of others, and willing to give of self, with the desire to have a family crowned with beautiful children and a commitment to teach them the principles of truth in the home.

An essential priority of a prospective wife is the desire to be a wife and mother. She should be developing the sacred qualities that God has given His daughters to excel as a wife and mother: patience, kindness, a love of children, and a desire to care for them rather than seeking professional pursuits. She should be acquiring a good education to prepare for the demands of motherhood.

A prospective husband should also honor his priesthood and use it in service to others. Seek a man who accepts his role as provider of the necessities of life, has the capacity to do it, and is making concerted efforts to prepare himself to fulfill those responsibilities.

I suggest that you not ignore many possible candidates who are still developing these attributes, seeking the one who is perfected in them. You will likely not find that perfect person, and if you did, there would certainly be no interest in you. These attributes are best polished together as husband and wife.

### **Counsel with the bishop**

Since many aspects of the temple experience are significantly different than regular worship services, get the counsel of your bishop to help prepare you. He can arrange for a specially trained individual to discuss important aspects of the temple to help you understand and appreciate more fully that sacred experience.

### **Savor each ordinance separately**

The endowment and sealing ordinances of the temple are so gloriously rich in meaning that you will want to allow significant time to receive those ordinances and to ponder their meaning. You may want to divide them into two temple visits. On your first visit, if possible, take an endowed member of your family or a close friend of your own gender to escort you. Because of the sacred nature of the temple experience, you would want to limit those who accompany you to a few family or close friends. Do not let receptions, wedding breakfasts, farewells, or other activities overshadow the sacred temple experience. Above all, do not be overly concerned. You will be helped in every step by caring temple workers. They will be intent on making your visit the glorious experience you anticipate.

Outside of the temple, we do not speak of the specific, sacred matters that unfold there. However, while within the temple, there will be authorized individuals to help answer your questions. On your first visit you will receive carefully prepared, specific instructions by authorized individuals regarding those matters which are not discussed outside of the temple walls. May your first experience in the temple be as moving and inspiring as was mine. It will be, as you carefully prepare.

### **Be worthy to receive the ordinances**

Be worthy. To commit in courtship intimate acts intended to unfold only within the bonds of marriage is transgression. Such activity offends the Holy Ghost, lays the foundation for heartache and disappointment, and could mask traits or characteristics that could prove conflictive or incompatible within the covenant of marriage. Seeds of distrust that mature into divorce and loss of temple

blessings are often sown through violation of the laws of personal purity. Don't make that mistake.

### **Sealing creates a new family unit**

When you are sealed forever in the house of the Lord, a new family unit is created. Parents, who have had direct responsibility for you since your birth, now move into an advisory role. Their counsel is precious now, but you and your eternal companion now make the decisions together.

As a husband and worthy priesthood bearer, you will want to emulate the example of the Savior, whose priesthood you hold. You will make giving of self to wife and children a primary focus of your life. Occasionally a man attempts to control the destiny of each family member. He makes all the decisions. His wife is subjected to his personal whims. Whether that is the custom or not is immaterial. It is not the way of the Lord. It is not the way a Latter-day Saint husband treats his wife and family.

### **Attend the temple regularly**

How grateful I am that President Hinckley has been inspired by the Lord to construct new temples at an unprecedented rate so that the ordinances are more accessible to members throughout the world. If you have received temple ordinances but do not now visit the temple, even when there is one nearby, with all the tenderness of my heart I invite you to come back to the temple. There are many reasons. It is a place of peace, solitude, and inspiration. Regular attendance will enrich your life with greater purpose. It will permit you to provide deceased ancestors the exalting ordinances you have received. Go to the temple. You know it is the right thing to do. Do it now.

### **Study, participate in the ordinances**

The temple ordinances are so imbued with symbolic meaning as to provide a lifetime of productive contemplation and learning. Ponder each word and activity in the temple. Study how they interrelate. As you ponder the significance of those matters, think of them in light of your relationship to the Savior and His to our Father in Heaven. Contemplate how the understanding you receive enhances your earth life by giving proper emphasis on things which are critically important.

Arrange to participate for deceased ancestors in the sealing and other ordinances as well as the endowment. I find it helpful when receiving ordinances for another to try and relate to that person specifically. I think of him and pray that he will accept the ordinance and benefit from it. Do these things with a prayer in your heart that the Holy Spirit will enhance your understanding and enrich your life. Those worthy prayers will be answered.

### **Keep hope for a temple marriage**

May I share a personal experience to help any who feel anguish when eternal marriage is mentioned since you believe your spouse will not prepare for that sacred experience because of deeply rooted characteristics or habits. About five years into our marriage, we had a growing experience. Our precious two-year-old son Richard died while undergoing surgery to correct a congenital heart defect. Within six weeks our daughter Andrea passed away at birth. My father, then not a member of the Church, loved little Richard very much. He said to my inactive mother, "I cannot understand how Richard and Jeanene seem to be able to accept the loss of these children."

Mother, responding to a prompting, said, "Kenneth, they have been sealed in the temple. They know that their children will be with them in the eternities if they live righteously. But you and I will not have our five sons because we have not made those covenants."

My father pondered those words. He began to meet with the stake missionaries and was soon baptized. In just over a year Mother, Dad, and the children were sealed in the temple. Later, President Kimball put his hands on my father's head, promised him the vigor and strength of youth, and gave him the sealing power. He worked as a sealer for 11 years in the Washington D.C. Temple with Mother at his side. You do your part. Don't abandon hope for a temple marriage.

If you are single and haven't identified a solid prospect for celestial marriage, live for it. Pray for it. Expect it in the timetable of the Lord. Do not compromise your standards in any way that would rule out that blessing on this or the other side of the veil. The Lord knows the intent of your heart. His prophets have stated that you will have that blessing as you consistently live to qualify for it. We do not know whether it will be on this or the other side of the veil. But live for it. Pray for it.

### **Eternal marriage brings joy**

I know the exquisite joy that comes from an eternal marriage sealed at a temple altar through the holy sealing power. When there is righteousness, a commitment to give of self, obedience to the commandments of God, and the resolve to seek His will in all things together, that joy is unspeakable. I do not have words to express the fulfillment and peace that flow from such a supernal experience, even when there is a temporary interruption of the glory of life

together on earth. It is that joy and happiness I want so much for each of you. More importantly, that is what your Father in Heaven wants for you.

Come to the temple now. It will greatly bless your life and provide essential ordinances for those beyond the veil that they cannot obtain by themselves.

I testify that with unimaginable suffering and agony at an incalculable price, the Savior earned His right to be our Intermediary, our Redeemer, our Final Judge. Through faith in Him and receipt of the requisite ordinances and covenants, you will earn your right to the blessings of eternal marriage, made possible through His infinite Atonement. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## President Faust

Elders Neal A. Maxwell and Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have just spoken to us.

The choir and congregation will now sing "Rejoice, the Lord Is King!" Following the singing, Elder Stephen A. West of the Seventy will address us. He will be followed by Elder Robert J. Whetten, also of the Seventy. Following Elder Whetten, Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will address us.

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The choir and congregation sang "Rejoice, the Lord Is King!"

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## Elder Stephen A. West

### Modern example of a good Samaritan

A few years ago, my wife and I served as a resource to a little inner-city branch of the Church that was composed of about 35 members. The branch president, Daniel Sawyer, a man I greatly admire, may have been the only member of that branch who had belonged to the Church for more than three or four years. Our meetings were held in a row house in one of the most troubled neighborhoods of a large eastern city. The house was located on a street where many buildings had been burned and looted during the extensive riots in 1968, and now, 25 years later, some of those damaged or destroyed buildings still had not been repaired or rebuilt. Up to the front of the row house were a few exterior stairs leading from the sidewalk up through a door which opened to some rooms that had been modified for use as classrooms and as an office. Another

door opening right from the sidewalk led down a few interior stairs to the basement, which was furnished with a sacrament table, a podium for the speaker, and folding chairs. Some of the most memorable Church experiences my wife and I have had took place in that setting.

One Sunday right in the middle of the branch sacrament meeting, a woman walked in the door off the street. She was a homeless woman who was wearing dirty, ragged clothes, coughing, choking, and blowing her nose into a filthy handkerchief. In a loud, hoarse voice she said, "I want to sing! I want to pray!" and walked right to the front row and sat down next to a member who was wearing a white blouse, leaned against her, and laid her head on her shoulder. The member immediately put her arms around this guest and held her in her arms throughout the remainder of the meeting. It happened that the speaker had been talking about the parable of the good Samaritan<sup>1</sup> as

the woman had come in. As this woman coughed and choked, the speaker continued telling of the parable. As he came to the end of his talk and was quoting a relevant scripture, suddenly in a loud voice this homeless woman finished giving the verse that the speaker had begun. In talking of this after sacrament meeting with the speaker, we thought it had probably been a long time since someone had affectionately put an arm around our visitor. We wondered what better illustration you could have of the parable of the good Samaritan than what we had just seen, and we were reminded of the Savior's words that preceded His telling of that parable: "Thou shalt love . . . thy neighbour as thyself."<sup>2</sup>

### **Modern example of the widow's mite**

A second experience in the branch dealt with a kind and conscientious woman who faithfully turned in envelopes containing a few coins for payment of her tithing. One day as she came to church, she was also holding in her hand a plastic sandwich bag with a piece of dried-up bread in it. She handed the plastic bag to us and said: "If you are going to belong to a church, you ought to contribute. I can't contribute much, but I can contribute the sacrament bread."

As we used her bread for the sacrament, the whole experience carried an additional meaning that day. Going through my mind was the verse that reads:

"And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much.

"And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing.

"And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you,

That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury:

"For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living."<sup>3</sup>

### **Example of giving to others**

A third experience in the branch came during a discussion the members were having in Sunday School concerning when you should give to those who ask you for aid. One of the members, who had come with his wife from Africa to further his education, raised his hand and told us of the following experience. As he had been walking home in the neighborhood, he had been approached by a man who put a pistol to his chest and demanded all his money. Our member took the money from his pockets and handed it over to the man and then said, "If you need the money that badly, I have more." He opened his briefcase and took out additional money, which he gave to the robber, saying, "Understand, you are not taking this from me; I am giving it to you in the name of the Lord because you need it." He said the robber looked at him in amazement, put the pistol in his belt, and said, "Where do you live? I'm going to walk you home because you're too good a man to be on these streets, and you are not safe here."

As they started to walk to the member's apartment, suddenly they were surrounded by police cars because a woman had seen the holdup from her apartment window and had called the police. The police arrested the robber and took him away. Having been the victim, this member was asked to be a witness later at the trial of the robber. At the trial, he testified that although the robber had demanded his money, he had told him that he gave the money to him in the name of the

Lord and that if the robber needed it that badly, he wanted him to have it.

Since then, when I hear the Savior's words, "Him that taketh away thy cloke forbid not to take thy coat also,"<sup>4</sup> my mind goes back not only to the Holy Land but also to the hard streets in that eastern city.

These are just a few small modern-day experiences that were not witnessed by many, but as they show, these were some exemplary people who lived in difficult conditions. One of the members, pointing to my 40-year-old Book of Mormon, the leather cover of which had largely torn away through wear, leaving frayed corners and exposing the cardboard backing, said, "Many of those in our branch are like your Book of Mormon, tattered and worn on the outside, but inside are great and important things."

#### **A young girl's testimony of Jesus**

Finally, may I tell you of a nine-year-old Spanish-American girl I interviewed one evening in Texas for baptism. I asked her if she knew who Jesus was. Her answer was, "Yes." "Who is He?" I asked. Sweeping her hand over her head and gesturing at everything in sight, she said, "He owns all of this!" Could any nine-year-old or perhaps any of us have summed it up any better? In only five words she had described the Savior with simple clarity: "He owns all of this!" When the interview was over, she told her mother she did not want to leave the chapel but wanted to stay and sleep that night in "Jesus' house." "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."<sup>5</sup>

#### **"Be not weary in well-doing"**

The Savior said to His disciples in the New World:

"Ye know the things that ye must do in my church; for the works which ye have seen me do that shall ye also do; for that which ye have seen me do even that shall ye do;

"Therefore, if ye do these things blessed are ye."<sup>6</sup>

In the meridian of time, among other things, the Savior gave a touch here, a kind word there, food (both real and spiritual) to the hungry, advice and counsel to those in need. He gave prayers with the frightened, kindness to the passed-over, respect and affection for the children, loving care for those who are burdened. "And thus we see that by small means the Lord can bring about great things."<sup>7</sup> "Wherefore, be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great."<sup>8</sup>

In these times when so much of our daily experience seems to point to a world moving in the wrong direction, may we take courage, faith, and comfort from the small, quiet, and gentle acts of caring, loving, humble, and dedicated followers of Christ. May we similarly replicate in our own lives the very lessons the Savior taught almost 2,000 years ago in my prayer, to which I add my testimony that He lives, and I do it in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### **NOTES**

1. See Luke 10:30-37.
2. Luke 10:27.
3. Mark 12:41-44.
4. Luke 6:29.
5. John 17:3.
6. 3 Nephi 27:21-22.
7. 1 Nephi 16:29.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 64:33.



## Elder Robert J. Whetten

### Love others as the Savior does

Alone in that upper room with the eleven, Jesus uses these last teaching moments of His mortal ministry to teach: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you. . . . By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."<sup>1</sup> He talks of His coming death and Resurrection: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."<sup>2</sup> He reaffirms His divine sonship: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."<sup>3</sup> And He promises that the Father will send them another comforter, the Holy Ghost: "He shall teach you all things."<sup>4</sup>

Jesus' unconditional love for us motivated His atoning sacrifice for our sins. How He lived His life is the example we should follow. Without His love we would be unable to return to our Heavenly Father. His way should be our way. "Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am."<sup>5</sup> He showed us that we must go about doing good, that the spiritual and physical welfare of our fellowmen is as important as our own, and that we should show genuine concern and compassion for all of our Heavenly Father's children.

### Seek to be filled with charity

Moroni defines Christlike love as charity. "And now I know that this love which thou hast had for the children of men is charity; wherefore, except men shall have charity they cannot inherit that place which thou hast prepared in the mansions of thy Father."<sup>6</sup> It's not enough to say we believe and that we love Him; we must be found possessed with His kind of love for others at that

last day. It is not necessary for us to lay down our life for others as He did, but like the Savior, we should bless the lives of others by giving of what our life is made up of—our time, our talents, our means, and ourselves.

Mormon urges us to "pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are *true followers* of his Son, Jesus Christ."<sup>7</sup> Like faith, Christlike love is a gift of the Spirit, is granted upon the principles of personal righteousness and in accordance to our level of obedience to the laws upon which it is predicated. And like faith, love must be exercised to grow.

### Love and serve others

We all live our lives one day at a time, and each of us, regardless of our age or circumstances, is presented each day with choices in our relationships with others. As we deny ourselves and reach out to serve others, the Spirit will refine us and teach us and we will come to learn what Paul meant: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith."<sup>8</sup> Our compassionate service to others will grow into divine love and change us, and "when he shall appear we shall be like him."<sup>9</sup>

Brigham Young taught, "We should commence our labors of love and kindness with the family to which we belong; and then extend them to others."<sup>10</sup> King Benjamin counseled parents to teach their children "to love one another, and to serve one another."<sup>11</sup> President Kimball taught that "God does notice us, and he watches over us. But it is usually through another mortal that he meets our needs. Therefore, it is vital that we serve each other in the kingdom."<sup>12</sup>

### **A young girl shows Christlike love**

Last January an earthquake in the central mountain region of Colombia left the city of Armenia devastated. Concerned stake presidents called the Area Presidency in Quito to find out what the needs of the members living in Armenia were. The district president confirmed that many Church members had lost their homes and had found shelter in the four undamaged chapels but urgently needed food and clothing. The Relief Society and priesthood leaders swung into action, and donations from members throughout Colombia poured into a designated chapel in each city. Seven-year-old Neidi had come with her parents to the chapel in the city of Cali and watched as Bishop Villareal received donations from members.

"Bishop, how can I help the children in Armenia?"

"Neidi, your parents have already helped."

She went to the other end of the chapel and observed that little clothing and no shoes for children were being packed. Neidi came back to the bishop with her shoes in her hand. "Now I know how I can help. Please give these shoes to another little girl in Armenia who has lost hers." Her bare feet made no sound as she slipped away.

### **Be full of love**

King Benjamin counseled his people to yield to the enticings of the Holy Ghost, put "off the natural man and [become] a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and [become] as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love."<sup>13</sup>

In the late spring of 1829, as the marvelous events of the Restoration were unfolding, the Lord told Joseph Knight through the Prophet Joseph, "And no one can assist in this work ex-

cept he shall be humble and full of love."<sup>14</sup> Today each worthy young man is asked to give two years in full-time missionary service. As missionaries teach His gospel and serve others, they are granted gifts of the Spirit, including a Christlike love for those they serve. Missionary service can and should become the foundation for a lifetime of happiness built on love and service to others.

And motherhood, like priesthood, is a divine call to serve and to nurture others. Who that has witnessed the pure love of a mother for her child can deny that this kind of love is of God? Sisters, this same kind of Christlike love can and should be extended to others throughout your life.

### **Give "all that you have and are"**

When the rich man who came to Jesus asked, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" the Lord reiterated the commandments, and the man answered, "All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me."<sup>15</sup>

As His disciples today, we should ask, "What lack I yet?" You can go about doing good, you can love and serve others in your family, in the Church, and in the community. At some point you must be willing "to render to him all that you have and are."<sup>16</sup>

Some of the truest followers I know are couples that have put the anticipated ease and pleasures of retirement on hold and followed Him into full-time service in His kingdom. If your desire is to grow in your discipleship together, talk to your bishop about a mission. Every mission in the Church needs more missionary couples, and the soon-to-be 100 temples in operation need more workers. President Hinckley has asked:

"Why are missionaries happy? Because they lose themselves in the service of others.

"Why are those who labor in the temples happy? Because their labor of love is in very deed harmonious with the great vicarious work of the Savior of mankind."<sup>17</sup>

### Lift one another's burdens

I am grateful to have been surrounded by loved ones who have blessed my life with their love and service. Like the converts in Alma's time, if we are to be called His people, we must be "willing to bear one another's burdens, that they may be light."<sup>18</sup> Each of us can think of true followers that have lifted the burdens of many through their Christlike love and service. Ernest LeRoy Hatch was the medical doctor in the community in which I grew up in northern Mexico. He was also my mission president and served several other missions. For much of his life he carried with him the written words to the hymn "More Holiness Give Me." The last two lines read, "More fit for the kingdom, more used would I be, more blessed and holy—more, Savior, like thee."<sup>19</sup>

As His true followers, the Savior wants us to love others as He loves them—more unconditionally, more purely, more perfectly. As in the past,

His apostles and prophets in our day continue to exemplify and teach that this Christlike love is the very essence of His gospel. I have come to know and feel of their love one for another and for each of us. I bear witness that they are true disciples of Jesus Christ. This Church is His kingdom on the earth. We have His and their example of love and service. May we be true disciples as well, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. John 13:34–35.
2. John 15:13.
3. John 14:6.
4. John 14:26.
5. 3 Nephi 27:27.
6. Ether 12:34.
7. Moroni 7:48; italics added.
8. Galatians 5:22.
9. Moroni 7:48.
10. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 271.
11. Mosiah 4:15.
12. *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (1982), 252.
13. Mosiah 3:19.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 12:8.
15. Matthew 19:16, 20–21.
16. Mosiah 2:34.
17. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 595.
18. Mosiah 18:8.
19. *Hymns*, no. 131.

## Elder Robert D. Hales

### The Spirit strengthens families

Strengthening families is our sacred duty as parents, children, extended family members, leaders, teachers, and individual members of the Church.

The importance of spiritually strengthening families is taught clearly in the

scriptures. Father Adam and Mother Eve taught their sons and daughters the gospel. The sacrifices of Abel were accepted by the Lord, whom he loved. Cain, on the other hand, "loved Satan more than God" and committed serious sins. Adam and Eve "mourned before the Lord,

because of Cain and his brethren," but they never ceased to teach their children the gospel (see Moses 5:12, 18, 20, 27; 6:1, 58).

We must understand that each of our children comes with varying gifts and talents. Some, like Abel, seem to be given gifts of faith at birth. Others struggle with every decision they make. As parents, we should never let the searching and struggling of our children make us waver or lose our faith in the Lord.

Alma the Younger, when "racked with torment . . . [and] harrowed up by the memory of [his] many sins," remembered hearing his father teach about the coming of "Jesus Christ, a Son of God, to atone for the sins of the world" (Alma 36:17). His father's words led to his conversion. In like manner, our teaching and testimony will be remembered by our children.

The 2,000 stripling warriors in the army of Helaman testified that their righteous mothers had powerfully taught gospel principles to them (see Alma 56:47-48).

At a time of great spiritual searching, Enos said, "The words which I had often heard my father speak concerning eternal life . . . sunk deep into my heart" (Enos 1:3).

In the Doctrine and Covenants the Lord says that parents are to teach their children "to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, when eight years old. . . .

"And they shall also teach their children to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord" (D&C 68:25, 28).

### **Teaching the gospel strengthens families**

As we teach our children the gospel through word and example, our families are spiritually strengthened and fortified.

The words of living prophets are clear regarding our sacred duty to strengthen our families spiritually. In 1995 the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles issued a proclamation to the world, declaring that "the family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children. . . . Husband and wife have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children. . . . Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness, to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, to teach them to love and serve one another, [and] to observe the commandments of God" ("The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102).

In February of this year, the First Presidency issued a call to all parents "to devote their best efforts to the teaching and rearing of their children in gospel principles which will keep them close to the Church. The home is the basis of a righteous life, and no other instrumentality can take its place or fulfill its essential functions in carrying forward this God-given responsibility."

In the February letter, the First Presidency taught that by teaching and rearing children in gospel principles, parents can protect their families from corrosive elements. They further counseled parents and children "to give highest priority to family prayer, family home evening, gospel study and instruction, and wholesome family activities. However worthy and appropriate other demands or activities may be, they must not be permitted to displace the divinely-appointed duties that only parents and families can adequately perform" (First Presidency letter, 11 Feb. 1999; cited in *Church News*, 27 Feb. 1999, 3).

With the help of the Lord and His doctrine, all the hurtful effects from challenges a family may meet can be understood and overcome. Whatever the

needs of family members may be, we can strengthen our families as we follow the counsel given by prophets.

The key to strengthening our families is having the Spirit of the Lord come into our homes. The goal of our families is to be on the strait and narrow path.

### **Ideas for strengthening families**

Countless things can be done within the walls of our homes to strengthen the family. May I share a few ideas that may help identify the areas that need strengthening in our own families. I offer them in a spirit of encouragement, knowing that each family—and each family member—is unique.

### **Home should be a safe place**

- Make our homes a safe place where each family member feels love and a sense of belonging. Realize that each child has varying gifts and abilities; each is an individual requiring special love and care.

- Remember, “a soft answer turneth away wrath” (Proverb 15:1). When my sweetheart and I were sealed in the Salt Lake Temple, Elder Harold B. Lee gave us wise counsel: “When you raise your voice in anger, the Spirit departs from your home.” We must never, out of anger, lock the door of our home or our heart to our children. Like the prodigal son, our children need to know that when they come to themselves they can turn to us for love and counsel.

- Spend individual time with our children, letting them choose the activity and the subject of conversation. Block out distractions.

### **Teach children to pray, read the scriptures, listen to worthy music**

- Encourage our children’s private religious behavior, such as personal

prayer, personal scripture study, and fasting for specific needs. Measure their spiritual growth by observing their demeanor, language, and conduct toward others.

- Pray daily with our children.

- Read the scriptures together. I remember my own mother and father reading the scriptures as we children sat on the floor and listened. Sometimes they would ask, “What does that scripture mean to you?” or “How does it make you feel?” Then they would listen to us as we responded in our own words.

- Read the words of the living prophets and other inspiring articles for children, youth, and adults in Church magazines.

- We can fill our homes with the sound of worthy music as we sing together from the hymnbook and the *Children’s Songbook*.

### **Hold family home evening, councils**

- Hold family home evening every week. As parents we are sometimes too intimidated to teach or testify to our children. I have been guilty of that in my own life. Our children need to have us share spiritual feelings with them and to teach and bear testimony to them.

- Hold family councils to discuss family plans and concerns. Some of the most effective family councils are one-on-one with each family member. Help our children know their ideas are important. Listen to them and learn from them.

### **Share the gospel, support Church leaders, participate as a family**

- Invite missionaries to teach less-active or nonmember friends in our homes.

- Show that we sustain and support Church leaders.

- Eat together when possible, and have meaningful mealtime discussions.

- Work together as a family, even if it may be faster and easier to do the job ourselves. Talk with our sons and daughters as we work together. I had that opportunity every Saturday with my father.

### **Teach children to be good friends, prepare for the future**

- Help our children learn how to build good friendships and make their friends feel welcome in our homes. Get to know the parents of the friends of our children.

- Teach our children by example how to budget time and resources. Help them learn self-reliance and the importance of preparing for the future.

### **Share heritage, family traditions**

- Teach our children the history of our ancestors and of our own family history.

- Build family traditions. Plan and carry out meaningful vacations together, considering our children's needs, talents, and abilities. Help them create happy memories, improve their talents, and build their feelings of self-worth.

### **Teach the importance of obeying the commandments, receiving ordinances**

- By word and example, teach moral values and a commitment to obeying the commandments.

- After my baptism and confirmation, my mother drew me aside and asked, "What do you feel?" I described as best I could the warm feeling of peace, comfort, and happiness I had. Mother explained that what I was feeling was the gift I had just received, the gift of the Holy Ghost. She told me that if I lived worthy of it, I would have that gift with me continually. That was a teaching moment that has lived with me all my life.

Teach our children the significance of baptism and confirmation, receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, partaking of the sacrament, honoring the priesthood, and making and keeping temple covenants. They need to know the importance of living worthy of a temple recommend and preparing for a temple marriage.

- If you have not yet been sealed in the temple to your spouse or children, work as a family to receive temple blessings. Set temple goals as a family.

- Be worthy of the priesthood which you hold, brethren, and use it to bless the lives of your family.

- Through the power of the Melchizedek Priesthood, dedicate our homes.

### **Be aware of community, school, and Church activities**

Resources are available outside the home. Wise use of them will strengthen our families.

- Encourage our children to serve in the Church and community.

- Talk to our children's teachers, coaches, counselors, advisers, and Church leaders about our concerns and the needs of our children.

- Know what our children are doing in their spare time. Influence their choice of movies, television programs, and videos. If they are on the Internet, know what they are doing. Help them see the importance of wholesome entertainment.

- Encourage worthwhile school activities. Know what our children are studying. Help them with their homework. Help them realize the importance of education and of preparing for employment and self-sufficiency.

- Young women: Attend Relief Society when you reach your 18th birthday. Some of you may be reluctant to make that transition. You may fear that you won't fit in. My young sisters, this is not

the case. There is much in Relief Society for you. It can be a blessing to you throughout your life.

- **Young men:** Honor the Aaronic Priesthood. It is the preparatory priesthood, preparing you for the Melchizedek Priesthood. Become fully active in the elders quorum when you are ordained to the Melchizedek Priesthood. The brotherhood, the quorum instruction, and the opportunities to serve others will bless you and your family throughout your life.

### **Follow the Lord's example of love**

Every family can be strengthened in one way or another if the Spirit of the Lord is brought into our homes and we teach by His example.

- **Act with faith;** don't react with fear. When our teenagers begin testing family values, parents need to go to the Lord for guidance on the specific needs of each family member. This is the time for added love and support and to reinforce your teachings on how to make choices. It is frightening to allow our children to learn from the mistakes they may make, but their willingness to choose the Lord's way and family values is greater when the choice comes from within than when we attempt to force those values upon them. The Lord's way of love and acceptance is better than Satan's way of force and coercion, especially in rearing teenagers.

- **Remember the Prophet Joseph Smith's words:** "Nothing is so much calculated to lead people to forsake sin as to take them by the hand, and watch over them with tenderness. When persons manifest the least kindness and love to me, O what power it has over my mind, while the opposite course has a tendency to harrow up all the harsh feelings and depress the human mind" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 240).

### **Children who stray will return**

- While we may despair when, after all we can do, some of our children stray from the path of righteousness, the words of Orson F. Whitney can comfort us: "Though some of the sheep may wander, the eye of the Shepherd is upon them, and sooner or later they will feel the tentacles of Divine Providence reaching out after them and drawing them back to the fold. Either in this life or the life to come, they will return. They will have to pay their debt to justice; they will suffer for their sins; and may tread a thorny path; but if it leads them at last, like the penitent Prodigal, to a loving and forgiving [mother's and] father's heart and home, the painful experience will not have been in vain. Pray for [our] careless and disobedient children; hold on to them with [our] faith. Hope on, trust on, till you see the salvation of God" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1929, 110).

### **Single adults, extended family can lend strength**

- What if you are single or have not been blessed with children? Do you need to be concerned about the counsel regarding families? Yes. It is something we all need to learn in earth life. Unmarried adult members can often lend a special kind of strength to the family, becoming a tremendous source of support, acceptance, and love to their families and the families of those around them.

- Many adult members of the extended family do much parenting in their own right. Grandparents, aunts and uncles, brothers and sisters, nieces and nephews, cousins, and other family members can have great impact on the family. I want to express my appreciation for those in my own extended family who have guided me by their example and testimony. Sometimes extended family

members can say things parents cannot say without starting an argument. After a long heart-to-heart discussion with her mother, one young woman said: "It would be awful to tell you and Dad I had done something wrong. But it would be worse to tell Aunt Susan. I just couldn't let her down."

### No perfect families

Knowing that we are in mortality to learn and to develop our faith, we should understand that there must be opposition in all things. During a family council in my own home, my wife said, "When you may think that someone has a perfect family, you just do not know them well enough."

### Set house, family in order

Brothers and sisters, as parents let us heed the admonition, even the rebuke, given by the Lord to Joseph Smith and the leaders of the Church in 1833 to "set in order [our] own house" (D&C 93:43). "I have commanded you to bring up your children in light and truth" (D&C 93:40). "Set in order [our] family, and see that they are more diligent and concerned at home, and pray always, or they shall be removed out of their place" (D&C 93:50).

The prophets of our day have given a similar admonition and warning to parents to set in order our families. May we be blessed with the inspiration and love to meet opposition with faith within our families. We will then know that our trials are to draw us closer to the Lord and to one another. May we listen to a prophet's voice and set in order our own homes (see D&C 93:41-49). The family is strengthened as we draw near to the Lord, and each member of the family is strengthened as we lift and strengthen and love and care for one another. "Thee lift me and I'll lift thee, and we'll ascend together" (Quaker proverb).

May we be able to welcome and maintain the Spirit of the Lord in our homes to strengthen our families. That each of our family members can stay on the "strait and narrow path which leads to eternal life" (2 Nephi 31:18), I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Faust

Elders Stephen A. West and Robert J. Whetten of the Seventy have just spoken to us, followed by Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting, which will convene in the Tabernacle this evening at 6:00 P.M. mountain standard time.

We call your attention to the need to move your clocks ahead one hour before retiring tonight because of the change to daylight saving time.

The nationwide Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. mountain daylight time. The Sunday morning session of conference will immediately follow thereafter.

We express gratitude to the combined choir from Ricks College for the beautiful music they have provided this afternoon.

The choir will now sing "Sweet Is the Peace the Gospel Brings." Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will then be our concluding speaker at this session. Following his remarks, the choir will sing a medley of "From Homes of Saints" and "Home Can Be a Heaven on Earth." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Eran A. Call of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "Sweet Is the Peace the Gospel Brings."

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## Elder Dallin H. Oaks

### The law of witnesses

Witnesses and witnessing are vital in God's plan for the salvation of His children. In the Godhead the function of the Holy Ghost is to bear witness of the Father and the Son (see 2 Nephi 31:18). The Father has borne witness of the Son (see Matthew 3:17; 17:5; John 5:31–39), and the Son has borne witness of the Father (see John 17). The Lord has commanded His servants to testify of Him (see Isaiah 43:10; Mosiah 18:9; D&C 84:62), and all of the prophets have borne witness of Jesus Christ (see Acts 10:42–43; Revelation 19:10).

The scriptures state that “in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established” (2 Corinthians 13:1; D&C 6:28; see also Deuteronomy 19:15). The most important ordinances of salvation—baptism, marriage, and other ordinances of the temple—are required to have witnesses (see D&C 127:6; 128:3).

The Bible witnesses of Jesus Christ by prophecies of His coming, by accounts of His ministry, and by the testimonies of those who carried His message to the world. The Book of Mormon has the same content: witnesses preceding, during, and following the ministry of the Messiah. Appropriately, it is now subtitled “Another Testament of Jesus Christ.”

### Book of Mormon witnesses

There are witnesses of the Book of Mormon itself. I have chosen to speak about the significance of their testimonies and about the life of one of them.

While Joseph Smith was translating the Book of Mormon, the Lord revealed that in addition to the Prophet's testimony, the world would have “the testimony of three of my servants, whom I shall call and ordain, unto whom I will show

these things” (D&C 5:11; see also 2 Nephi 27:12–13; Ether 5:2–4). “They shall know of a surety that these things are true,” the Lord declared, “for from heaven will I declare it unto them” (D&C 5:12).

There were also eight witnesses, but their testimony is a subject for another time.

### Testimony of the Three Witnesses

The three men chosen as witnesses of the Book of Mormon were Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris. Their written “Testimony of Three Witnesses” has been included in all of the almost 100 million copies of the Book of Mormon the Church has published since 1830. These witnesses solemnly testify that they “have seen the plates which contain this record” and “the engravings which are upon the plates.” They witness that these writings “have been translated by the gift and power of God, for his voice hath declared it unto us.” They testify, “We declare with words of soberness, that an angel of God came down from heaven, and he brought and laid before our eyes, that we beheld and saw the plates, and the engravings thereon; and we know that it is by the grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, that we beheld and bear record that these things are true.”

Further, “the voice of the Lord commanded us that we should bear record of it; wherefore, to be obedient unto the commandments of God, we bear testimony of these things” (“The Testimony of Three Witnesses,” Book of Mormon).

### Three Witnesses never denied testimony

People who deny the possibility of supernatural beings may reject this remarkable testimony, but people who are open to believe in miraculous experiences

should find it compelling. The solemn written testimony of three witnesses to what they saw and heard—two of them simultaneously and the third almost immediately thereafter—is entitled to great weight. Indeed, we know that upon the testimony of one witness great miracles have been claimed and accepted by many religious people, and in the secular world the testimony of one witness has been deemed sufficient for weighty penalties and judgments.

Persons experienced in evaluating testimony commonly consider a witness's opportunity to observe an event and the possibility of his bias on the subject. Where different witnesses give identical testimony about the same event, skeptics look for evidence of collusion among them or for other witnesses who could contradict them.

Measured against all of these possible objections, the testimony of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon stands forth in great strength. Each of the three had ample reason and opportunity to renounce his testimony if it had been false or to equivocate on details if any had been inaccurate. As is well known, because of disagreements or jealousies involving other leaders of the Church, each one of these three witnesses was excommunicated from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints by about eight years after the publication of their testimony. All three went their separate ways, with no common interest to support a collusive effort. Yet to the end of their lives—periods ranging from 12 to 50 years after their excommunications—not one of these witnesses deviated from his published testimony or said anything that cast any shadow on its truthfulness.

Furthermore, their testimony stands uncontradicted by any other witnesses. Reject it one may, but how does one explain three men of good character uniting and persisting in this published testimony

to the end of their lives in the face of great ridicule and other personal disadvantage? Like the Book of Mormon itself, there is no better explanation than is given in the testimony itself, the solemn statement of good and honest men who told what they saw.

### **Martin Harris as a witness**

Having a special interest in Martin Harris, I have been saddened at how he is remembered by most Church members. He deserves better than to be remembered solely as the man who unrighteously obtained and then lost the initial manuscript pages of the Book of Mormon.

### **Martin well-respected in the community**

When the Book of Mormon was published, Martin Harris was nearly 47 years of age, more than 20 years older than Joseph Smith and the other two witnesses. He was a prosperous and respected citizen of Palmyra, New York. He owned a farm of over 240 acres, large for the time and place. He was an honored veteran of two battles in the War of 1812. His fellow citizens entrusted him with many elective offices and responsibilities in the community. He was universally respected for his industry and integrity. Assessments by contemporaries described him as "an industrious, hard-working farmer, shrewd in his business calculations, frugal in his habits," and "strictly upright in his business dealings" (quoted in Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses* [1981], 96–97, 98).

This prosperous and upright older man befriended the young and penniless Joseph Smith, giving him the \$50 that permitted him to pay his debts in Palmyra and locate in northeastern Pennsylvania, about 150 miles away. There, in April 1828, Joseph Smith began his first persistent translation of the Book of Mormon. He

dictated, and Martin Harris wrote until there were 116 pages of manuscript.

### **Stolen and lost 116 pages**

Martin's persistent requests to show this manuscript to his family wearied Joseph into letting him take it to Palmyra, where its pages were stolen from him, lost, and probably burned. For this the Lord rebuked Martin and Joseph. Joseph had his gift of translation suspended for a season, and Martin was rebuked as "a wicked man" who had "set at naught the counsels of God, and . . . broken the most sacred promises which were made before God" (D&C 3:12-13; see also D&C 10). Fortunately, both Joseph and Martin were later forgiven by the Lord, and the work of translation resumed with other scribes. We obviously honor Joseph for his magnificent ministry, but Martin's subsequent faithfulness continues under a shadow from which this important man should be rescued.

I will review some of the high points of Martin Harris's life following the devastating episode of the stolen and lost manuscript.

### **Selected as one of the Three Witnesses**

About nine months after Martin's rebuke, the Prophet Joseph received a revelation declaring that there would be three witnesses to the plates and if Martin would humble himself he would be privileged to see them (see D&C 5:11, 15, 24). A few months later, Martin Harris was selected as one of the Three Witnesses and had the experience and bore the testimony described earlier.

### **Finances printing of Book of Mormon**

One of Martin Harris's greatest contributions to the Church, for which he should be honored for all time, was his financing the publication of the Book of

Mormon. In August 1829 he mortgaged his home and farm to Egbert B. Grandin to secure payment on the printer's contract. Seven months later the 5,000 copies of the first printing of the Book of Mormon were completed. Later, when the mortgage note fell due, the home and a portion of the farm were sold for \$3,000. In this way Martin Harris was obedient to the Lord's revelation:

"Thou shalt not covet thine own property, but impart it freely to the printing of the Book of Mormon. . . .

"Pay the debt thou hast contracted with the printer. Release thyself from bondage" (D&C 19:26, 35).

### **Consecrates his property to Zion**

Other records and revelations show Martin Harris's significant involvement in the activities of the restored Church and his standing with God. He was present at the organization of the Church on April 6, 1830, and was baptized that same day. A year later he was called to journey to Missouri with Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Edward Partridge (see D&C 52:24). In Missouri that year—1831—he was commanded to "be an example unto the church, in laying his moneys before the bishop of the church" (D&C 58:35), thus becoming the first man the Lord called by name to consecrate his property in Zion. Two months later he was named with Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Rigdon, and others to be "stewards over the revelations and commandments" (D&C 70:3; see also 70:1), a direction to publish and circulate what later became the Doctrine and Covenants.

### **Serves a mission in Pennsylvania**

In 1832 Martin Harris's older brother, Emer, who is my great-great-grandfather, was called on a mission from Ohio (see D&C 75:30). Emer spent a

year preaching the gospel near his former home in northeastern Pennsylvania. During most of this time Emer's companion was his brother Martin, whose zeal in preaching even caused him to be jailed for a few days. The Harris brothers baptized about 100 persons. Among those baptized was a family named Oaks, which included my great-great-grandfather. Thus, my middle name and my last name come from the grandfathers who met in that missionary encounter in Susquehanna County in 1832–33.

### **Serves on the first high council**

Back in Kirtland, Ohio, after his mission, in February 1834 Martin Harris was chosen by revelation to serve on the first high council in the Church (see D&C 102:3). Less than three months later, he left Kirtland with the men of Zion's Camp, marching 900 miles to Missouri to relieve the oppressed Saints there.

### **Helps select the Twelve Apostles**

One of the most important events of the Restoration was the calling of a Quorum of Twelve Apostles in February 1835. The Three Witnesses, including Martin Harris, were appointed to "search out the Twelve" (D&C 18:37), to select them and, under authority granted by the Prophet and his counselors, to ordain them [these ordinations were then confirmed under the hands of the First Presidency] (see B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church*, 1:372–75).

### **Loses confidence in Joseph Smith**

From a position of great influence and authority, all three witnesses fell, each in his own way. During 1837 there were intense financial and spiritual conflicts in Kirtland, Ohio. Martin Harris later said that he "lost confidence in Joseph Smith" and "his mind became

darkened" (quoted in *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses*, 110). He was released from the high council in September 1837 and three months later was excommunicated.

### **Moves to Kirtland, is rebaptized**

Martin's wife, Lucy, who had been involved in the loss of the manuscript pages, died in Palmyra in 1836. Within a year thereafter, Martin and his family located in Kirtland, and Martin married Caroline Young, a niece of Brigham Young.

When most of the Saints moved on—to Missouri, to Nauvoo, and to the West—Martin Harris remained in Kirtland. There he was rebaptized by a visiting missionary in 1842. In 1856 Caroline and their four children took the long journey to Utah, but Martin, then 73 years of age, remained on his property in Kirtland. In 1860 he told a census taker that he was a "Mormon preacher," evidence of his continuing loyalty to the restored gospel. Later he would tell a visitor, "I never did leave the Church; the Church left me" (quoted in William H. Homer Jr., "'... Publish It upon the Mountains': The Story of Martin Harris," *Improvement Era*, July 1955, 505), meaning of course that Brigham Young led the Church west and the aging Martin remained in Kirtland.

During part of his remaining years in Kirtland, Martin Harris acted as a self-appointed guide-caretaker of the deserted Kirtland Temple, which he loved. Visitors reported his alienation from the leaders of the Church in Utah but also his fervent reaffirmation of his published testimony of the Book of Mormon.

### **Moves to Utah, reaffirms his testimony**

Finally, in 1870, Martin's desire to be reunited with his family in Utah resulted in a warm invitation from Brigham

Young, a ticket for his passage, and an official escort from one of the Presidents of Seventy. A Utah interviewer of the 87-year-old man described him as "remarkably vigorous for one of his years, . . . his memory being very good" (*Deseret Evening News*, 31 Aug. 1870). He was rebaptized, a common practice at that time, and spoke twice to audiences in this Tabernacle. We have no official report of what he said, but we can be sure of his central message since over 35 persons left similar personal accounts of what he told them during this period. One reported Martin saying, "It is not a mere belief, but is a matter of knowledge. I saw the plates and the inscriptions thereon. I saw the angel, and he showed them unto me" (quoted in *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses*, 116).

When he reiterated his testimony of the Book of Mormon in the closing days of his life, Martin Harris declared, "I tell you of these things that you may tell others that what I have said is true, and I dare not deny it; I heard the voice of God commanding me to testify to the same" (quoted in *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses*, 118).

### Dies at age 92

Martin Harris died in Clarkston, Utah, in 1875, at age 92. His life is commemorated in the memorable pageant *Martin Harris: The Man Who Knew*, produced each summer in Clarkston, Utah.

### Return and feast at the Lord's table

What do we learn from this example? (1) Witnesses are important, and the testimony of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon is impressive and reliable. (2) Happiness and spiritual progress lie in following the leaders of the Church. (3) There is hope for each of us, even if we have sinned and strayed from a favored position.

The Lord's invitation is warm and loving: "Come back and feast at the table of the Lord, and taste again the sweet and satisfying fruits of fellowship with the saints" (The First Presidency, "An Invitation to Come Back," *Church News*, 22 Dec. 1985, 3). I testify that this is the word of the Lord and the work of the Lord, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang a medley of "From Homes of Saints" and "Home Can Be a Heaven on Earth."

Elder Eran A. Call offered the benediction.

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## GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session, the third session of the 169th Annual General Conference, convened in the Tabernacle at 6:00 P.M. on Saturday, April 3, 1999. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by a combined men's choir from Brigham Young University. Mack Wilberg and Ronald Staheli directed the choir, and Clay Christiansen was the organist.

President Hinckley opened the meeting with the following remarks.

### President Gordon B. Hinckley

Brethren, we welcome you to this general priesthood session of the 169th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

These services are being relayed by closed circuit and satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Assembly Hall, the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, the BYU Marriott Center, the Missionary Training Center, and in locations in many countries throughout the world.

The singing during this session will be given by the combined men's choir from BYU under the direction of Mack Wilberg and Ronald Staheli, with Clay Christiansen at the organ.

We will begin this priesthood session with the choir singing "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah."

Elder Neil L. Andersen offered the invocation.

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### President Hinckley

The choir will now sing "I Know That My Redeemer Lives." Following the singing, Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will address us.

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The choir sang "I Know That My Redeemer Lives."

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## Elder Russell M. Nelson

It is a joy to be with you tonight, brethren, and wonderful to see so many young men with their fathers. We are assembled because of our desire to hearken to the leaders of the Church. But this congregation is unique. I don't see any mothers. Not one of us could be here without a mother, yet we are all here—without our mothers.

Tonight I am attending with a son, sons-in-law, and grandsons. Where are their mothers? Gathered in the kitchen of our home! What are they doing? Making

large batches of homemade doughnuts! And when we return home, we will feast on those doughnuts. While we enjoy them, these mothers, sisters, and daughters will listen intently as each of us speaks of things he learned here tonight. It's a nice family tradition, symbolic of the fact that everything we learn and do as priesthood bearers should bless our families.<sup>1</sup>

Let us speak about our worthy and wonderful sisters, particularly our mothers, and consider our sacred duty to honor them.

### **A young man's sin dishonors his mother**

When I was a young university student, one of my classmates urgently pleaded with a group of us—his Latter-day Saint friends—to donate blood for his mother, who was bleeding profusely. We went directly to the hospital to have our blood typed and tested. I'll never forget our shock when told that one of the prospective donors was unfit because of a positive blood test for a venereal disease. That infected blood was his own! Fortunately, his mother survived, but I'll never forget his lingering sorrow. He bore the burden of knowing that his personal immorality had disqualified him from giving needed aid to his mother, and he had added to her grief. I learned a great lesson: if one dishonors the commandments of God, one dishonors mother, and if one dishonors mother, one dishonors the commandments of God.<sup>2</sup>

### **Honor motherhood**

During my professional career as a doctor of medicine, I was occasionally asked why I chose to do that difficult work. I responded with my opinion that the highest and noblest work in this life is that of a mother. Since that option was not available to me, I thought that caring for the sick might come close. I tried to care for my patients as compassionately and competently as Mother cared for me.

Many years ago the First Presidency issued a statement that has had a profound and lasting influence upon me. "Motherhood," they wrote, "is near to divinity. It is the highest, holiest service to be assumed by mankind. It places her who honors its holy calling and service next to the angels."<sup>3</sup>

Because mothers are essential to God's great plan of happiness, their sacred work is opposed by Satan, who would destroy the family and demean the worth of women.

You young men need to know that you can hardly achieve your highest potential without the influence of good women, particularly your mother and, in a few years, a good wife. Learn now to show respect and gratitude. Remember that your mother is your mother. She should not need to issue orders. Her wish, her hope, her hint should provide direction that you would honor. Thank her and express your love for her. And if she is struggling to rear you without your father, you have a double duty to honor her.

### **A mother's letter saves her child**

The influence of your mother will bless you throughout life, especially when you serve as a missionary. Long years ago, Elder Frank Croft was serving in the state of Alabama. While preaching to the people, he was forcefully abducted by a vicious gang, to be whipped and lashed across his bare back. Elder Croft was ordered to remove his coat and shirt before he was tied to a tree. As he did so, a letter he had recently received from his mother fell to the ground. The vile leader of the gang picked up the letter. Elder Croft closed his eyes and uttered a silent prayer. The attacker read the letter from Elder Croft's mother. From a copy of that letter, I quote:

"My beloved son, . . . remember the words of the Savior when He said, . . . 'Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my name's sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad for you will have your reward in Heaven for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.' Also remember the Savior upon the cross suffering from the sins of the world when He had uttered these immortal words, 'Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.' Surely, my boy, they who are mistreating you . . . know not what they do or they would not do it. Sometime, somewhere, they will understand

and then they will regret their action and they will honor you for the glorious work you are doing. So be patient, my son, love those who mistreat you and say all manner of evil against you and the Lord will bless you and magnify you. . . . Remember also, my son, that day and night, your mother is praying for you."

Elder Croft watched the hateful man as he studied the letter. He would read a line or two, then sit and ponder. He arose to approach his captive. The man said: "Feller, you must have a wonderful mother. You see, I once had one, too." Then addressing the mob, he said: "Men, after reading this Mormon's mother's letter, I just can't go ahead with the job. Maybe we had better let him go." Elder Croft was released without harm.<sup>4</sup>

We are deeply grateful for the faithful mothers and fathers of our wonderful missionaries. The love they bear for their children is sublime.

### **Honor your sisters**

We who bear the holy priesthood have a sacred duty to honor our sisters. We are old enough and wise enough to know that teasing is wrong. We respect sisters—not only in our immediate families but all the wonderful sisters in our lives. As daughters of God their potential is divine. Without them eternal life would be impossible. Our high regard for them should spring from our love of God and from an awareness of their lofty purpose in His great eternal plan.

Hence, I warn against pornography. It is degrading of women. It is evil. It is infectious, destructive, and addictive. The body has means by which it can cleanse itself from harmful effects of contaminated food or drink. But it cannot vomit back the poison of pornography. Once recorded, it always remains subject to recall, flashing its perverted images across your mind, with power to draw you away from the wholesome things in life. Avoid it like the plague!

### **Honor your wife**

To you who are not yet married, think about your future marriage. Choose your companion well. Remember the scriptures that teach the importance of marriage in the temple:

"In the celestial glory there are three heavens or degrees;

"And in order to obtain the highest, a man must enter into this order of the priesthood [meaning the new and everlasting covenant of marriage];

"And if he does not, he cannot obtain it."

The highest ordinances in the house of the Lord are received by husband and wife together and equally—or not at all!

In retrospect I see that the most important day of my life was the day when my sweetheart, Dantzel, and I were married in the holy temple. Without her I could not have the highest and most enduring blessings of the priesthood. Without her I would not be the father to our wonderful children or grandfather to our precious grandchildren.

As fathers we should have love unbounded for the mothers of our children. We should accord to them the gratitude, respect, and praise that they deserve. Husbands, to keep alive the spirit of romance in your marriage, be considerate and kind in the tender intimacies of your married life. Let your thoughts and actions inspire confidence and trust. Let your words be wholesome and your time together be uplifting. Let nothing in life take priority over your wife—neither work, recreation, nor hobby.

An ideal marriage is a true partnership between two imperfect people, each striving to complement the other, to keep the commandments, and to do the will of the Lord.

### **The family is ordained of God**

The family is the most important unit of society and of the Church. The family is ordained of God. It is central to



His plan for the eternal destiny of His children.<sup>6</sup> "God has established families to bring happiness to his children, to allow them to learn correct principles in a loving atmosphere, and to prepare them for eternal life."<sup>7</sup>

### Fathers preside over the family in love

Parents have the primary responsibility for the welfare of their children.<sup>8</sup> The Church does not replace that parental responsibility. Ideally, the Latter-day Saint family is presided over by a worthy man who holds the priesthood. This patriarchal authority has been honored among the people of God in all dispensations. It is of divine origin, and that union, if sealed by proper authority, will continue throughout eternity. He who is the Father of us all and the source of this authority demands that governance in the home be in love and righteousness.<sup>9</sup>

You fathers can help with the dishes, care for a crying baby, and change a diaper. And perhaps some Sunday you could get the children ready for Church, and your wife could sit in the car and honk.

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it."<sup>10</sup> With that kind of love, brethren, we will be better husbands and fathers, more loving and spiritual leaders. Happiness at home is most likely to be achieved when practices there are founded upon the teachings of Jesus Christ.<sup>11</sup> Ours is the responsibility to ensure that we have family prayer, scripture study, and family home evening. Ours is the responsibility to prepare our children to receive the ordinances of salvation and exaltation and the blessings promised to tithe payers. Ours is the privilege to bestow priesthood blessings of healing, comfort, and direction.

The home is the great laboratory of love. There the raw chemicals of selfishness and greed are melded in the crucible of cooperation to yield compassionate concern and love one for another.<sup>12</sup>

### Express love to your wife, mother, sisters

Honor the special sisters in your lives, brethren. Express your love to your wife, to your mother, and to the sisters. Praise them for their forbearance with you even when you are not at your best. Thank the Lord for these sisters who—like our Heavenly Father—love us not only for what we are but for what we may become. Humbly I thank God for my mother, my sisters, my daughters, granddaughters, and for my special sweetheart, companion, and friend—my wife!

May God bless us to honor each virtuous woman, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. See Doctrine and Covenants 23:3.
2. Many scriptures teach us to honor our parents. See Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16; Matthew 15:4; 19:19; Mark 7:10; 10:19; Luke 18:20; Ephesians 6:2; 1 Nephi 17:55; Mosiah 13:20; Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 19:19, The Holy Scriptures: Inspired Version; Joseph Smith Translation, Mark 7:12, Bible appendix.
3. In James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. (1965–75), 6:178. In 1935 the First Presidency stated, "The true spirit of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints gives to woman the highest place of honor in human life" (in *Messages of the First Presidency*, 6:5).
4. See Arthur M. Richardson, *The Life and Ministry of John Morgan* (1965), 267–68.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 131:1–3.
6. See "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
7. *Family Guidebook* (pamphlet, 1992), iv.
8. See Doctrine and Covenants 68:25–28.
9. See Doctrine and Covenants 121:41–45.
10. Ephesians 5:25.
11. See *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
12. See Mosiah 4:14–15; Doctrine and Covenants 68:25–31.

## President Hinckley

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Twelve has just spoken to us.

We will now hear from Elders Ray H. Wood, Ned B. Roueché, and D. Lee Tobler, members of the Seventy.

## Elder Ray H. Wood

### Disobedience of one affects all

After the children of Israel had crossed the river Jordan and Jericho had been destroyed, they confronted the city of Ai. Ai was a smaller city than Jericho, with fewer defenders, and Joshua thought to conquer it with only 3,000 soldiers. But the men of Ai smote the force of Israel and put them to flight. Joshua prostrated himself before the Lord and queried the reason for their defeat. Then came the answer—and a lesson.

When Jericho was destroyed, the Lord forbade them from taking any of the precious possessions to be found therein. But one man, Achan, seized and attempted to hide some of the spoils. "When I saw [them]," he said, "I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent" (Joshua 7:21). The Lord commanded them to be destroyed, and Achan was stoned to death.

It may seem difficult for us to understand how the dishonesty of one man could have had such a far-reaching effect to cause the defeat of the army of Israel and the death of 36 men. Elder James E. Talmage observed, "A law of righteousness had been violated, and things that were accursed had been introduced into the camp of the covenant people; this transgression interposed resistance to the current of divine help, and until the people had sanctified themselves the power was not renewed unto them" (*The Articles of Faith*, 12th ed. [1924], 105; see also Joshua 7:10–13).

### Sin causes loss of Spirit

When a person violates any of God's commandments, if there is no repentance the Lord withdraws His protective and sustaining influence. When we lose power with God, we know of a certainty that the problem lies within us and not within God. "I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise" (D&C 82:10). Our misdeeds bring despair. They sadden and extinguish the "perfect brightness of hope" offered by Christ (2 Nephi 31:20). Without God's help, we are left to ourselves.

### Priesthood works only in righteousness

Priesthood is authority to act as an authorized agent of the Lord to perform ordinances which provide certain spiritual blessings to all individuals. It is power to convey the mind and will of God in Church government, in obtaining His word through revelation, in preaching the gospel, and in administering the ordinances of exaltation for both the living and the dead. Truly it is a mighty thing to bear the priesthood of God.

We are told that "the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and that the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness" (D&C 121:36). President Spencer W. Kimball reminds us: "There is no limit to the power of the priesthood . . . you hold. The limit comes in you if

you do not live in harmony with the Spirit of the Lord and you limit yourselves in the power you exert" (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball [1982], 498; italics added).

As holders of the priesthood of God, we must remember that we "are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people" (1 Peter 2:9). We are commanded to "come . . . out from the wicked, and be . . . separate, and touch not [the] unclean things" (Alma 5:57).

### **Magnify, be worthy of the priesthood**

When a man, young or old, accepts and receives the priesthood, there comes a sacred responsibility of magnifying that priesthood. This requires each one of us to serve with diligence, to teach with faith and testimony, to lift and strengthen those whose lives we touch. This means that we cannot live only unto ourselves, but we are also responsible for the growth, development, and welfare of others.

There should be nothing automatic about ordination to any office of the priesthood because of age or circumstances. Blessed be the priesthood leader who conscientiously interviews each candidate for priesthood office and receives from that candidate a report of prior honorable service, an affirmation of personal purity and worthiness, and a confirmation of magnified effort and future intent to willingly bear and fulfill the great responsibility of priesthood office.

### **Priesthood mantle not to be neglected**

There should be nothing casual, nonchalant, or indifferent about holding priesthood. Once accepted, it should not be ignored, neglected, or cast aside. It is a mantle of honor and power that may be ours forever.

By accepting a call to priesthood, each man binds himself by his own integrity to act in a certain way. This brings a sense of responsibility, generating in each of us a power of reinforcement for positive action and a deterrent to slothfulness.

For those who take these sacred and holy callings lightly, President George Q. Cannon cautions us: "We must honor the Priesthood we hold or that Priesthood, instead of exalting us, will be the means of damning us. . . . It is a fearful thing to receive the Priesthood of God and not magnify it" (*Gospel Truth*, sel. Jerreld L. Newquist, 2 vols. [1957-74], 1:229).

### **Jesus Christ is the example**

As we consider the priesthood, let us not forget its true title: the Holy Priesthood, after the Order of the Son of God. Jesus Christ is the great high priest of God. He is the source of all priesthood authority and power on this earth. As our Savior, Mediator, and Redeemer, He is our great exemplar of the path we are to follow—in word, in deed, in belief, in doctrine, in faith, in ordinances, and in our personal righteousness. "For even hereunto were [we] called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that [we] should follow his steps" (1 Peter 2:21).

He has promised us glory, eternal life, exaltation, even all He has, if we faithfully bear His priesthood and magnify all of our callings. We become joint heirs with Him in the kingdom of His Father. The Apostle Paul said it well: "And all those who are ordained unto this priesthood are made like unto the Son of God, abiding a priest continually" (Joseph Smith Translation, Hebrews 7:3).

I bear my solemn witness that it may be so, "relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save" (2 Nephi 31:19), even our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. In His sacred name, Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Ned B. Roueché

My dear brethren, I am humbled by this opportunity and ask for an interest in your faith and prayers. May we be blessed and guided by the Spirit to hear and feel this evening.

### Example of reactivation

A number of years ago I received a telephone call that would change my life—my eternal life.

A good sister from my ward called to invite me to perform a dance floor show number at a Mutual activity evening that was being held in a couple of weeks. Dancing was a hobby of mine, and I was studying ballroom dancing at a studio in Salt Lake City. I had never been to a youth MIA dance before, and I was excited to accept the invitation to perform.

My partner and I arrived on the appointed evening and were greeted enthusiastically. I was surprised to find that we were the only ones on the program. It was an exciting experience, and I thoroughly enjoyed the evening.

The following Sunday morning, I decided to go to church in our ward for the first time since I was ordained a deacon. At that time none of my family was active. I found people who welcomed me warmly, and they demonstrated a genuine friendship and caring. These experiences started me on the road to activity and service in the Church that has been a joy to me throughout the years.

The senior Aaronic Priesthood committee, as it was called then, was a group of brethren who worked with men who were older than the normal Aaronic Priesthood age. These were just regular men who were doing what the Lord wanted them to do. They took me under their wing, and we became good friends. A wonderful returned missionary gave our class instruction. He taught the basics of the gospel and helped prepare me to serve a mission. During this same

time I was asked to help teach dancing in the ward, which gave me a feeling of being needed, and it also gave me a responsibility.

The next 15 months flew by, filled with growth and happiness as I progressed. I soon received a call to serve a mission in Mexico. I quickly grew to love the language, the country, and its people. Sharing the message of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ gave me a foundation upon which to build the rest of my life.

I know what it means to have a friend, a responsibility, and to be nurtured by the good word of God. There are many that do not understand what is missing in their lives and hunger for those tender feelings that come from knowing the love of our Savior. They are good people who lie dormant, as it were, awaiting the awakening of their soul by those who bring the “good news.” There are others who watch us, observe our examples, and say, “I like what I see; how can I become a part of it?”

### “The worth of souls is great”

I invite you brethren of the priesthood, both young and old, to look around you, seek out, and extend a warm hand of friendship to those less active and nonmembers. Invite them to participate with you. Become their friend, and you will make a difference and bless their lives for generations to come.

“Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God;

“For, behold, the Lord your Redeemer suffered death in the flesh; wherefore he suffered the pain of all men, that all men might repent and come unto him.

“And he hath risen again from the dead, that he might bring all men unto him, on conditions of repentance.

“And how great is his joy in the soul that repenteth!”<sup>1</sup>

And may I add this wonderful promise of His: "Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more."<sup>2</sup>

At this Easter season, as we celebrate His Resurrection, let us focus our attention on the price that He paid so willingly for all of those who will follow Him and do His will.

I invite all to come and enjoy these great blessings of the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ that has been restored.

Let us cast aside the traditions of men, all the things that clutter our lives and lead us carefully away from what Moroni called "the right way,"<sup>3</sup> and lift our hearts to Him who has ransomed us, even Jesus Christ our Savior, and follow Him.

Listen to the feelings of your heart and follow its prompting as you hear the messages of this conference. You will be taught from on high and receive answers to your prayers.

Let us go forth with greater enthusiasm to succor those in need and bring souls unto Him, that they may be fed, nurtured by His good word, and know His tender love. "You shall be laden with sheaves upon your back, for the laborer is worthy of his hire,"<sup>4</sup> and there will be rejoicing in many hearts.

That evening so long ago when I was invited to share my talent, the door opened to a wonderful new world of friends and activity in the Church. I am grateful for those who reached out with a warm hand of fellowship, invited me in, nurtured me, and blessed my life.

I leave you with my witness that Jesus is the Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. This is His Church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 18:10-13.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 58:42.
3. Moroni 6:4.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 31:5.

## Elder D. Lee Tobler

My beloved brethren of the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthood, this is a special blessing to stand at this pulpit where prophets and apostles of God and righteous and capable men and women have for many decades taught and counseled the members of the Church.

### Help families without the priesthood

Tonight it is my humble desire to be a voice of encouragement to priesthood leaders, particularly to stake and ward councils, to increase their attention to the families in the Church who do not as yet have the blessing of the Melchizedek Priesthood in their homes. These are families where the father has not yet

received the priesthood, which is so necessary in blessing and guiding his family. For these families the fulness of the gospel—particularly the blessings of the temple—awaits not only their own efforts but also the loving efforts of Church members who already understand what the temple ordinances mean to the family.

### Impact of priesthood in a home

As children we were raised in a home where it was clearly understood that the priesthood was as essential to life as was the water we drank to satisfy our thirst. My mother had experienced in her own family the joy of her large family coming into full Church activity and then

as a family going to the Salt Lake Temple. At the age of 47 years, my Grandfather Shoell had been brought into the priesthood with all of its attendant blessings. Upon the completion of a full-time mission, Mother sought a special priesthood blessing, asking that she might be directed to a worthy priesthood bearer who would not only be her husband but would also be a worthy priesthood father to her children. After that priesthood blessing, all of those righteous desires came into being for her and for us as a family in southern Nevada. From the start we were a family grounded in the priesthood and ordinances of the restored gospel, especially the sacred temple ordinances. This gave us as children a sense of being whole and complete, not only for our immediate family but also with our mother's and father's extended families.

Early on we learned of the healing power of the priesthood as Father, sometimes alone and at other times assisted by men of the ward, exercised that priesthood in our home. In the 1930s in that small Nevada pioneer town, there were no doctors. The nearest doctors were in Las Vegas or St. George. The first thought in times of accidents and sickness was to receive a blessing, invoking that priesthood power. I remember Mother saying from time to time, "We don't have doctors here in Bunkerville, but we have the priesthood to bless us, and that is enough." And mighty were the blessings which calmed and reassured both young and old. We were never powerless when the priesthood was there. I have always been grateful for that early awareness of the power of the priesthood of God in our home.

### **Priesthood protects homes from evil**

Our homes today face unprecedented challenges that are tearing at the fabric of the family—that are taking away from

the homes a sense of peace and confidence about the future. The evil forces parading immoral conduct, dishonesty, and enslavement through drugs seem to be strengthening. These moral issues and challenges will certainly not go away. We will also find that the temporal challenges with respect to everyday living will intensify. We all have become very aware that employment is no longer as secure as in former years as businesses and nonbusiness institutions all around the world merge and consolidate in order to be more competitive. The family farm is increasingly exposed to worldwide markets and general economic conditions rather than just local or national conditions of earlier years.

In virtually all pursuits, the rapidly changing conditions in the world are bearing down on families. They are causing a sense of uneasiness in parents and children. These conditions, coupled with the steady erosion of moral values, can best be dealt with in the family. This is achieved when the powers of righteousness are marshalled in the home under the worthy priesthood leadership of the father, equally yoked with a good and righteous mother.

### **Families with priesthood need not fear**

Indeed, in the February 11, 1999, letter to all the members throughout the world, the First Presidency called again upon fathers and mothers to devote their best efforts to the teaching and rearing of their children in gospel principles. Further, they counseled that the home is the basis of a righteous life, and no other instrumentality can take its place or fulfill its essential functions.

Where the priesthood foundations to cope with these challenges are in place in the family, as in the home of my youth, then we will not fear the eventual outcomes in future years. We may be

bruised and worn, but the outcome will be of highest eternal worth. Families where the priesthood is honored and exercised will be able to endure the present pressures and become eternal families. And in the process, individual members of families will have been perfected and prepared for the rewards of the faithful.

### **Help fathers prepare for the priesthood**

There are in every ward and branch many families without the priesthood. In these families there are husbands and fathers who are simply waiting for a supportive invitation to become prepared to bear the Melchizedek Priesthood. Their wives pray and wait for that outstretched hand. These are men who, through our teaching and nurturing, can be made capable to bear that priesthood. They can be fathers of revelation and guidance to their families. They can be fathers who give blessings to their own children, who baptize them and confirm them. Husband and wife will go to the temple, and they will take their children to the temple to be sealed together for time and all eternity. They will ordain their sons to the priesthood, and they will bless their sons and daughters in sickness and in health. Most of them are already good providers to their families in a temporal sense. They must now learn how to provide for their families in an eternal spiritual sense.

There is a way for each ward through councils to reach out to all these men and women and their families and to open the roads to the temple for them. How else will we or they receive exaltation or cope with the challenges that lie ahead? May I make an appeal to the bishops and branch presidents, to Melchizedek Priesthood quorums, to the ward and branch councils to establish a high priority to reach out to these families in a prayerful, thoughtful way. Christ's Church will rise to its full stature when these families are brought safely under the mantle of the priesthood. Of Him and of His great work I testify in the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Hinckley**

Elders Ray H. Wood, Ned B. Roueché, and D. Lee Tobler of the Seventy have just spoken to us.

The choir and congregation will now sing "Redeemer of Israel." Following the singing President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will address us. He will be followed by President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the Presidency.

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The choir and congregation sang "Redeemer of Israel."

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## **President James E. Faust**

My beloved brethren, I come to this pulpit this evening with profound feelings of love and respect for your faithful obedience in honoring the priesthood you bear. I have prayed for guidance in what I should say because I wish to raise a warning voice.

### **Lack of restraint leads to destruction**

In today's society the difference between right and wrong is being obscured by loud, seductive voices calling for no restraints in human conduct. They advocate absolute freedom without regard to

consequences. I state unequivocally that such behavior is the high road to personal destruction.

### **Example of President McKay's horse**

Tonight I speak to the priesthood of this Church and particularly to the young men of the Aaronic Priesthood about how to become really free. Obedience leads to true freedom. The more we obey revealed truth, the more we become liberated. President David O. McKay spoke about his horse Dandy, who wanted complete freedom and no restraints. President McKay said:

"Under the saddle he was as willing, responsive, and cooperative as a horse could be. . . .

"But Dandy resented restraint. He was ill-contented when tied and would nibble at the tie-rope until he was free. He would not run away—just wanted to be free. Thinking other horses felt the same, he would proceed to untie their ropes. . . .

" . . . His curiosity and desire to explore the neighborhood led him and me into trouble. Once on the highway he was hit by an automobile. . . .

"Recovering from that, and still impelled with a feeling of wanderlust, he inspected the fence throughout the entire boundary. He even found the gates wired. . . .

"One day, however, somebody left the gate unwired. Detecting this, Dandy unlatched it, took [my dog Scotty] with him, and together they . . . went to an old house used for storage. Dandy's curiosity prompted him to push open the door. . . . There was a sack of grain. What a find! Yes, and what a tragedy. The grain was poison bait for rodents! In a few minutes Dandy and [Scotty] were in spasmodic pain, and shortly both were dead."

President McKay continued: "How like Dandy are many of our youth! . . . They are impulsive, full of life, full of

curiosity. . . . They too are restive under restraint, but if they are kept busy, guided carefully and rightly, they prove to be responsive and capable; if left to wander unguided, they all too frequently violate principles of right, which often leads to snares of evil, disaster, and even death."<sup>1</sup>

Being bridled, or yielding obediently to restraint, is necessary for our personal growth and progression. Recently a nationally broadcast program talked about wild horses that are being tamed by prisoners. As the prisoners formed friendships with the horses, they learned about patience, controlling tempers, respect for others, and the value of working within a system. As they watched the horses learn to be obedient to their commands, they realized how they could have avoided the terrible mistakes that had put them in prison. I add that obedience to righteous principles would have offered them freedom from social diseases, shame, degradation, and feelings of guilt. Like the horses, they could still learn, progress, and achieve.

### **Earth obeys God's commands**

We hear many persuasive voices demanding freedom from restrictions, particularly from moral restraints. However, we learn from the history of the earth that any successful society has had boundaries. Consider the earth itself. It was formed out of matter and in the beginning was empty, desolate, and dark. Then came order as God commanded that the light should be divided from the darkness. God's command was obeyed, and the earth had its first day, followed by its first night. Then God ordered the creation of the atmosphere. He organized the sun, the moon, and the stars to shine in their appropriate times and seasons. After a series of commands and obedience to commands, the earth not only became habitable but beautiful.<sup>2</sup>



Brother Jake Garn, former U.S. senator, traveled into space with a team of American astronauts a few years ago. Recalling the view they had of the enormity of the heavens from the space shuttle *Discovery*, he commented that to orbit the earth is to recognize that we are all children of God and that the earth operates in obedience to God's laws. He spoke also of the magnificent beauty of the earth from space and that it is absolutely breathtaking.<sup>3</sup>

This earth on which we dwell is an individual planet occupying a unique place in space. But it is also part of our solar system, an orderly system with eight other planets, asteroids, comets, and other celestial bodies that orbit the sun. Just as the earth is a planet in its own right, so each of us is an individual in our own sphere of habitation. We are individuals, but we live in families and communities where order provides a system of harmony that hinges on obedience to principles. Just as order gave life and beauty to the earth when it was dark and void, so it does to us. Obedience helps us develop the full potential our Heavenly Father desires for us in becoming celestial beings worthy someday to live in His presence.

### **Earning trust leads to more freedom**

Now, brethren, another element of freedom is trust. Almost 60 years ago, when I was going on my first mission, President McKay taught us missionaries a great truth. Without a word he walked over to the blackboard, picked up a piece of chalk, and wrote, "It is better to be trusted than to be loved." I have pondered that statement and have seen some fine examples of it. I will relate one example from the scriptures.

### **Pharaoh trusts Joseph**

Joseph, the son of Jacob and Rachel, was sold into slavery in Egypt. Because

of treachery in the house of Potiphar, Joseph went to prison. Pharaoh had two troubling dreams. Hearing of Joseph's discernment from the chief butler, he sent for him to interpret the dreams. Joseph told him through inspiration that seven years of plenty would be followed by seven years of famine. Pharaoh not only recognized this true interpretation but he trusted Joseph and appointed him to be second only to Pharaoh in power. The years passed and the famine came. In time Joseph rescued all of his brothers and his father from starvation.<sup>4</sup> Because he earned the implicit trust of those who were over him, Joseph enjoyed a great amount of freedom. Like Joseph, you too can be trusted by others, but trust must be earned.

### **Obedience brings blessings**

As in all things, the Savior is our pattern. The Apostle Paul wrote, "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience."<sup>5</sup> In our own finite way, we too can learn obedience even as Christ did. As young children we learn respect for authority as we obey our parents, thus earning their trust. If we don't obey, we are like the boy Jack whose father said to him, "Every time you disobey, I get another gray hair." "Wow, Dad," Jack answered, "so it was you who gave Grandpa all his gray hair."<sup>6</sup> Hopefully in the schoolroom we learn other lessons of discipline that help us to get along with others. When obedience becomes our goal, it is no longer an irritation; instead of a stumbling block, it becomes a building block.

Obedience to the Word of Wisdom keeps us from addictions so we do not become slaves to alcohol, drugs, or tobacco. Our bodies will be healthy and our minds clear because the promise associated with this principle is that "all saints who remember to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments, shall receive health in their navel and marrow to their bones."<sup>7</sup>

An additional promise in this revelation says we “shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures.”<sup>8</sup> So by obedience we also gain knowledge. As the Savior said, “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine.”<sup>9</sup>

Obedience brings peace in decision making. If we have firmly made up our minds to follow the commandments, we will not have to redecide which path to take when temptation comes our way. That is how obedience brings spiritual safety.

### **A man obeys promptings**

Brethren, another aspect of obedience is our obedience to spiritual promptings. This too can be liberating. How many times have we felt regret for ignoring a prompting from a higher source?

Ephraim Hanks is a remarkable example of a young man's obedience to spiritual promptings. In the fall of 1856, after he had gone to bed, he heard a voice say to him, “The handcart people are in trouble and you are wanted; will you go and help them?” Without any hesitation he answered, “Yes, I will go if I am called.”

He rode quickly from Draper to Salt Lake City. As he arrived he heard the call for volunteers to help the last handcart companies come into the valley. Eph jumped up and said, “I am ready now!” He was as good as his word, leaving at once and alone.

A terrific storm broke as he took his wagon eastward over the mountains. It lasted three days, and the snow was so deep that it was impossible to move the wagons through it. So Eph decided he would go on horseback. He took two horses, one to ride and one to pack, and picked his way carefully through the snow to the mountains. Dusk came as he made his lonely camp at South Pass. As

he was about to lie down he thought about the hungry Saints and instinctively asked the Lord to send him a buffalo. As he opened his eyes at the end of his prayer, he was startled at the sight of a buffalo standing barely 50 yards away. He took aim, and one shot sent the animal rolling down into the hollow where he was encamped.

Early the next morning, he took the two horses and the buffalo meat and reached Ice Springs Bench. There he shot another buffalo, even though it was rare to find buffalo in this area this late in the season. After he had cut the meat into long strips, he loaded up his horses and resumed his journey. And now I quote from Eph's own narrative:

“I think the sun was about an hour high in the west when I spied something in the distance that looked like a black streak in the snow. As I got near to it, I perceived it moved; then I was satisfied that this was the long looked for handcart company, led by Captain Edward Martin. . . . When they saw me coming, they hailed me with joy inexpressible, and when they further beheld the supply of fresh meat I brought into camp, their gratitude knew no bounds. Flocking around me, one would say, ‘Oh, please, give me a small piece of meat;’ another would exclaim, ‘My poor children are starving, do give me a little;’ and children with tears in their eyes would call out, ‘Give me some, give me some.’ . . . Five minutes later both my horses had been released of their extra burden—the meat was all gone, and the next few hours found the people in camp busily engaged in cooking and eating it, with thankful hearts.”<sup>10</sup>

Certainly Ephraim Hanks's obedience to spiritual promptings led him to become a vanguard hero as he forged ahead alone through that devastating winter weather to preserve many pioneer lives. Because he listened to the whisperings

of the Spirit and obeyed the counsel of the Brethren, Eph became a notable liberating force in the lives of those desperate, struggling pioneers.

### Obedience brings freedom and liberty

Freedom and liberty are precious gifts that come to us when we are obedient to the laws of God and the whisperings of the Spirit. If we are to avoid destruction, which was the fate of President McKay's horse Dandy and his companion, fences or guardrails must be built, beyond which we cannot go. The fences which we must stay within are the principles of revealed truth. Obedience to them makes us truly free to reach the potential and the glory which our Heavenly Father has in store for us.

I testify to you of the importance of obedience. I also wish to testify to you, my brethren, of the prophetic mantle which rests upon President Hinckley,

which enables him to receive the inspiration and guidance from the head of this Church, the Lord and Savior, which I do in His sacred name, even Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Quoted in Rick Walton and Fern Oviatt, comp., *Stories for Mormons* (1983), 86–87.
2. See Abraham 4.
3. Conversation with E. Jake Garn, 23 Feb. 1999.
4. See Genesis 37; 39–42.
5. Hebrews 5:8.
6. Adapted from Jacob M. Braude, comp., *Braude's Treasury of Wit and Humor* (1964), 147.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 89:18.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 89:19.
9. John 7:17.
10. See Sidney Alvarus Hanks and Ephraim K. Hanks, *Scouting for the Mormons on the Great Frontier* (1948), 132–33, 135–36.

## President Thomas S. Monson

### Safeguarding life's foundations

I am honored tonight to be with the vast army of priesthood bearers who daily respond to calls to serve, who teach diligently as the Lord has commanded, and who labor mightily to bring a correction course to a specific challenge which the Church must meet—namely, to live in the world without being of the world.

In this day in which we live, the floodwaters of immorality, irresponsibility, and dishonesty lap at the very moorings of our individual lives. If we do not safeguard those moorings, if we do not have deeply entrenched foundations to withstand such eroding influences, we are going to experience difficulty.

One of the greatest safeguards we have in the Church is a strong, firm, committed, dedicated, and testifying Melchizedek Priesthood base.

### Living and dead water

In my office I have two small earthen containers. One is filled with water I retrieved from the Dead Sea. The other contains water from the Sea of Galilee. Occasionally I will shake one of the bottles to ensure that the water has not diminished. When I follow this practice, my mind turns to these two different bodies of water. The Dead Sea is void of life. The Sea of Galilee is filled with life and with memories of the mission of the Lord Jesus Christ.

### Too few young men becoming elders

There is another body of water found throughout the Church today. I speak of the pool of prospective elders in each ward and each stake. Picture in your mind a river of water gushing into the pool. Then consider a trickle of water emerging from that stagnated pool—a trickle which represents those going forward into the Melchizedek Priesthood. The pool of prospective elders is becoming larger and wider and deeper more rapidly than any of us can fully appreciate.

It is essential, even critical, that we study the Aaronic Priesthood pathway, since far too many boys falter, stumble, then fall without advancing into the quorums of the Melchizedek Priesthood, thereby eroding the active priesthood base of the Church and curtailing the activity of loving wives and precious children.

What can we as leaders do to reverse this trend? The place to begin is at the headwaters of the Aaronic Priesthood stream. There is an ancient proverb which purports to correctly determine the sanity of an individual. A person is shown a stream of water flowing into a stagnant pond. He is given a bucket and asked to commence to drain the pond. If he first takes steps to effectively dam the inflow to the pond, he is adjudged sane. If on the other hand he ignores the inflow and tries to empty the pond bucket by bucket, he is designated as insane.

The bishop, by revelation, is the president of the Aaronic Priesthood and is president of the priests quorum in his ward. He cannot delegate these God-given responsibilities. However, he can place accountability with those called as quorum advisers, men who can touch the lives of boys.

The bishop's counselors, other ward officers and teachers, and particularly the fathers and the mothers of our young men can be of immeasurable help. Also very effective can be the service rendered by Aaronic Priesthood quorum presidencies.

This, then, is our goal: to save every young man, thereby assuring a worthy husband for each of our young women, strong Melchizedek Priesthood quorums, and a missionary force trained and capable of accomplishing what the Lord expects.

A wise first step is to guide each deacon to a spiritual awareness of the sacredness of his ordained calling. In one ward, this lesson was effectively taught pertaining to the collection of fast offerings.

### Some young men learn about tithing

On fast day the ward members were visited by deacons and teachers so that each family could make a contribution. The deacons were a bit disgruntled, having to arise earlier than usual to fulfill this assignment.

The inspiration came for the bishopric to take a busload of the deacons and teachers to Welfare Square here in Salt Lake City. Here they saw needy children receiving new shoes and other items of clothing. Here they witnessed empty baskets being filled with groceries. There was no money exchanged. One brief comment was made: "Young men, this is what the money you collect on fast day provides—even food, clothing, and shelter." The Aaronic Priesthood young men smiled more, stepped higher, and served with a willing mind in the filling of their assignments.

### Assign priesthood duties

A question: Is every ordained teacher given the assignment to home teach? What an opportunity to prepare for a mission. What a privilege to learn the discipline of duty. A boy will automatically turn from concern for self when he is assigned to "watch over" others.

And what of the priests? These young men have the opportunity to bless the sacrament, to continue their home teaching duties, and to participate in the sacred ordinance of baptism.

### **Example of priests blessing sacrament**

I remember as a deacon watching the priests as they would officiate at the sacrament table. One priest by the name of Barry had a lovely voice and would read the sacrament prayers with clear diction—as though he were competing in a speech contest. The other members of the ward, particularly the older sisters, would compliment him on his “golden voice.” I think he became a bit proud. Jack, another priest in the ward, was hearing impaired, which caused his speech to be unnatural in its sound. We deacons would twitter at times when Jack would bless the emblems. How we dared to do so is beyond me, for Jack had hands like a bear and could have crushed any one of us.

On one occasion Barry, with the beautiful voice, and Jack, with the awkward delivery, were assigned together at the sacrament table. The hymn was sung; the two priests broke the bread. Barry knelt to pray, and we closed our eyes. But nothing happened. Soon we deacons opened our eyes to see what was causing the delay. I shall ever remember the picture of Barry frantically searching the table for the little white card on which were printed the sacrament prayers. It was nowhere to be found. What to do? Barry’s face turned pink and then crimson as the congregation began to look in his direction.

Then Jack, with that bearlike hand, reached up and gently tugged Barry back onto the bench. He himself then knelt on the little footstool and began to pray: “O God, the Eternal Father, we ask thee in the name of thy Son, Jesus Christ, to bless and sanctify this bread to the souls of all those who partake of it.”<sup>1</sup> He continued the prayer, and the bread was passed. Jack also blessed the water, and it was passed. What respect we deacons gained that day for Jack, who though handicapped in speech, had memorized

the sacred prayers! Barry, too, had a new appreciation for Jack. A lasting bond of friendship had been established.

### **Leaders, families are a major influence**

Beyond the influence of the bishopric and the Aaronic Priesthood quorum advisers is the impact of the home. Help of parents, when enlisted wisely, can frequently make the difference between success and failure. A survey we conducted recently reveals that the influence of the home is a dominant factor in determining missionary service and temple marriage.

I know in my experience of only three wards with a full complement of 48 priests. These wards were presided over by Joseph B. Wirthlin, Alfred B. Smith, and Alvin R. Dyer. Almost without exception, each young man filled a mission and married in the temple. One of the keys to their success was to call to service as Aaronic Priesthood advisers men who were models for the young men to follow. An ideal model is a returned missionary, fresh from his mission and filled with testimony, where a young Aaronic Priesthood holder can say, “That’s the man I want to follow.”

### **Impact goes far beyond the young man**

As we dam off that inflow of Aaronic Priesthood streaming into the pool of prospective elders, we will solve more problems than we realize. We will ensure that every young man will more likely than not go on a mission and will marry in the temple. Then there will not be that disproportionate number of worthy young women with few worthy young men to select as an eternal companion. We are not talking about a boy; we’re talking about husbands, fathers, grandfathers, patriarchs to their own families. Let’s put a solid foundation beneath our Aaronic Priesthood young men.

## Rescue adult converts too

Let us not overlook the adult converts to the Church who receive the Aaronic Priesthood but who are not ordained to the office of elder in a timely fashion. They then join the brethren who remain in that stagnant pool of inactivity. There are those wards and stakes which have rescued vast numbers of fine men who had felt trapped by no outlet in the pond. In traveling the Church, I kept records of those units which had caught the vision of this rescue effort. All of them had similar experiences. They learned that the rescue work is best done one-on-one and at the ward level. The bishop has to be involved, for isn't he the president of the Aaronic Priesthood as well as the presiding high priest of his ward?

## Choose instructors prayerfully

Worthy and well-prepared instructors must be called to help in such a critical effort. Brethren, prayerfully analyze your situation and then call to the colors those whom the Lord has prepared to go forth to serve and to save. "Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God."<sup>2</sup> Ponder the joy that comes to a wife and children when Daddy sees the light, mends his ways, and follows in the footsteps of Jesus Christ our Lord.

## Example of an effective teacher

An example of true love and inspired teaching was found in the life of the late James Collier, who had through his personal efforts reactivated a large number of brethren in Bountiful, Utah. I was invited by Brother Collier to address those who had now been ordained elders and who, with their wives and families, had been to the Salt Lake Temple to receive those eternal covenants and blessings for which they had so earnestly strived.

At the banquet honoring this achievement, I could see and I could feel the love

that Jim had for those whom he had taught and rescued and the love they had for him. Unfortunately, Jim Collier at that time was afflicted with a terminal illness and had to persuade the doctors to allow him to leave the hospital to attend this final night of recognition.

As Jim stood at the pulpit, a large smile came over his face. With emotion he expressed his love to the group. There wasn't a dry eye to be found. Brother Collier quipped, "Everyone wants to go to the celestial kingdom, but no one wants to die to get there." Then, lowering his voice, Jim continued, "I'm prepared to go, and I will be there waiting on the other side to greet each of you, my beloved friends."

Jim returned to the hospital. His funeral service was held just a short time later.

## Seek divine help

In fulfilling our responsibility to those who bear the Aaronic Priesthood, both the youth and the prospective elders, I urge that we remember that there is no need for us to walk alone. We can look up and reach out for divine help. "The recognition of [a] power higher than man . . . does not in any sense debase him. If in his faith he ascribes beneficence and high purpose to the power which is superior to himself, he envisions a higher destiny and nobler attributes for his kind and is stimulated and encouraged in the struggle of existence. . . . He must seek[,] believing, praying, and hoping that he will find. No such sincere, prayerful effort will go unrequited—that is the very constitution of the philosophy of faith."<sup>3</sup> So taught President Stephen L. Richards.

## Pursue the right path

A line from the delightful play *The King and I* gives us encouragement in our labors. The King of Siam lay dying.

With him is Anna, his English tutor, whose son asks her the question, "Was he as good . . . as he could have been?" Anna answers wistfully, "I don't think any man has ever been as good . . . as he could have been—but this one [really] tried."<sup>4</sup>

The Prophet Joseph declared, "Happiness is the object and design of our existence; and will be the end thereof, if we pursue the path that leads to it; and this path is virtue, uprightness, faithfulness, holiness, and keeping all the commandments of God."<sup>5</sup>

Let us walk these clearly defined paths. To help us do so we can follow the shortest sermon in the world. It can be found on a common traffic sign. It reads, "Keep Right."

### **"Do you work for God?"**

This advice was found and followed by Joe, who had been asked to get up at six in the morning and drive a crippled child 50 miles to a hospital. He didn't want to do it, but he didn't know how to say no. A woman carried the child out to the car and set him next to the driver's seat, mumbling thanks through her tears. Joe said everything would be all right and drove off quickly.

After a mile or so, the child inquired shyly, "You're God, aren't you?"

"I'm afraid not, little fellow," replied Joe.

"I thought you must be God," said the child. "I heard Mother praying next to my bed and asking God to help me get

to the hospital, so I could get well and play with the other boys. Do you work for God?"

"Sometimes, I guess," said Joe, "but not regularly. I think I'm going to work for Him a lot more from now on."

My brethren, will you? Will I? Will we? I pray humbly, yet earnestly, that we will. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. Moroni 4:3.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 18:10.
3. In Conference Report, Oct. 1937, 35, 38.
4. Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II, *The King and I* (1951).
5. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 255–56.

### **President Hinckley**

President James E. Faust and President Thomas S. Monson of the First Presidency have just spoken to us.

The Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 tomorrow morning. We should be in our places at about 9:15.

Daylight saving time, we remind you, begins tomorrow at 2:00 A.M. Move your clocks ahead, or you will miss half the conference.

We express our gratitude to this wonderful chorus from BYU, which has sung to us. Following my remarks they will sing again "The Spirit of God," and the benediction will then be offered by Elder Richard E. Cook of the Seventy.

## **President Gordon B. Hinckley**

My dear brethren, it is a tremendous honor and responsibility to speak to you. I pray the Lord will bless me.

### **Priesthood is tremendous brotherhood**

What a tremendous brotherhood this is, composed of hundreds of thousands of

men and boys who have been ordained to the priesthood of God. What a mighty concourse this would be if we were all to come together in one great gathering. It would astonish the world. There is nothing like it of which I am aware.

### **Priesthood is the backbone of Church**

You are the backbone of the Church, my brethren. From your ranks come the bishops and branch presidents, the district and stake presidents, the Area Authority Seventies, and all of the General Authorities.

You young men are the substance of a great missionary program whose influence is felt throughout the world. Altogether, you are men and boys who have taken on the whole armor of God to move forward His work in the earth.

Whenever we gather in one of these meetings, I am sorry that we cannot accommodate all who wish to come. From the moment the doors of the Tabernacle were opened tonight, there was a flood of young men and their fathers. Hopefully the new hall will be finished a year from now, and we will be able to accommodate all who wish to come.

And to you brethren who are taking advantage of the broadcast and satellite transmission of these proceedings, we feel at one with you.

I think, my brethren, that our Father in Heaven smiles down upon us. I think it must be of great comfort to Him to look upon the hundreds of thousands of men and boys who love Him, who carry in their hearts a testimony of Him and His Beloved Son, who give leadership and direction to His Church, who stand as heads of families where there is righteousness and where truth is taught and exemplified.

We have become a great body of men, young and old. There is scarcely anything we cannot accomplish if we work unitedly together with one mind and one purpose and one heart.

### **Realize the importance of priesthood**

I hope that each of us is aware of the tremendous thing that has come to us with ordination to the priesthood. This is the authority of God in the earth. It comes from Him as a divine bestowal. It carries with it the power and the authority to govern in the affairs of the Church. It carries with it the power and the authority to bless in the name of the Lord, to lay hands upon the sick and call down the powers of heaven. It is sacred and holy. It partakes of the divine. Its authority is expressed in mortality and reaches beyond the veil of death.

I hope we are worthy of the priesthood we bear. I plead with you, every one of you, to conduct your lives in such a way as to be worthy of it.

### **Rise above the evils of the world**

As we have been reminded, this is a season of great evil in the world. No one needs to be reminded of that. We are constantly exposed to the muck and filth of pornography, to salacious and evil behavior totally unbecoming anyone who holds the priesthood of God.

It is a challenge to work in the world and live above its filth.

Dishonesty is rampant. It is manifest in cheating that goes on in schools, in businesses that rob and defraud. Temptations are everywhere about us; unfortunately, some succumb to these.

Brethren, be strong. Rise above the evils of the world. We need not be prudish. We need not adopt a holier-than-thou attitude. We need only let our personal integrity, our sense of right and wrong, and simple honesty govern our actions.

Let us live the gospel in our homes. Let there be an honest manifestation of love between husbands and wives, between children and their parents. Control the voice of anger. Be absolutely loyal one to another.



## Do what is right

Simply "do what is right [and] let the consequence follow" (*Hymns*, no. 237). So live that each morning you may kneel in prayer, seeking the direction and guidance of the Holy Spirit, as well as its protective power, as you go about your work of the day. So live that each night, before retiring, you may come before the Lord in prayer without shame or embarrassment or the need to plead for forgiveness. I do not hesitate to say that God will bless you if you will do so. Someday you will grow old and look back upon your life. You will be able to say: "I lived with integrity. I cheated no one, not even myself. I reveled in the companionship of my wife, who is the mother of our children. I am proud of those children. I am grateful to God for His manifest blessings."

If such can be your lot, I promise that when the shades of old age gather about you, there will be tears of gratitude in your eyes and the throbbing of a thankful heart beating in your breast.

## Gratitude for bishops

Now, some years ago, more than 10 years ago, I spoke from this pulpit concerning the bishops of the Church. I wish to return briefly to that subject again tonight.

I carry in my heart a deep appreciation for our bishops. I am profoundly grateful for the revelation of the Almighty under which this office was created and functions.

## Church organization effective in crisis

As all of you are aware, last fall a terrible storm hit Central America. For six days and nights, Hurricane Mitch locked in over that area and particularly over Honduras. The winds blew ferociously, and the rains fell without letup.

Rivers swelled and took with them houses that had been built along their banks. More than 200 bridges were washed out in Honduras, destroying means of travel. The soil from the highlands washed towards the sea in a deluge of filthy mud. Houses were filled to the tops of the windows. Yards and streets were filled. People fled in terror, leaving all behind them.

One of our bishops secured a big truck and went about gathering his people, taking them to higher ground. When the truck could no longer get through, he somehow secured a boat. He was looking after his flock.

I went down there to see what had happened and to give comfort, where possible. I beheld a miracle. I witnessed in operation the simple and marvelously effective organization of this Church.

Every member of this Church has a bishop or a branch president. I have only commendation for other relief efforts which came in from across the world. But I have unending admiration for the wonderful manner in which the Church operated. The bishops appealed to their stake presidents, who appealed to the Area Presidency, who appealed to headquarters here in Salt Lake City. Within hours great quantities of basic foodstuffs, medicine, and clothing were on their way from our storehouses.

A warehouse was rented in San Pedro Sula in the area of the greatest damage. It was the bishops who marshaled their people to work shifts in the warehouse putting into plastic bags enough food to take care of a family for a week, clothing to put on their backs, medicine to safeguard them against disease. Every bishop knew his own people. He, with his Relief Society president, knew their needs. These were not faceless strangers working as employees of government. They were friends, each a member of a ward family small enough that they knew one

another's needs. There was no argument, no greedy grasping for food and clothing. Everything was orderly. It was systematic. It was friendly. It was motivated by love and concern, and it was done quickly to meet an immediate need. It was the gospel at work in a quiet and magnificent manner.

The waters finally subsided, but mud was left in a thick and ugly coating on everything. Nothing became more valuable than shovels and wheelbarrows. And together, again under the direction of the bishops, the mud was cleaned from the houses.

We visited a meetinghouse on a Saturday. There were many people there, with a bishop, a loving father to his flock, giving direction. The pews, which had been floating in the water, were taken out and carefully cleaned. Mud was scraped from the walls and the floors. Then the mops came out and the polishing cloths, and before nightfall that Saturday evening, the building had been made ready for worship services on the Sabbath.

I stand in humble gratitude and respect and admiration for the bishops of this Church. In the most dire of circumstances, I watched them in La Lima, Honduras. I spoke with them, shook their hands, loved them. How thankful I am for these men who, without regard for their own comfort, give of their time, of their wisdom, of their inspiration in presiding over our wards throughout the world. They receive no compensation other than the love of their people. There is no rest for them on the Sabbath nor very much at other times. They are the ones closest to the people, best acquainted with their needs and circumstances.

### Requirements of bishops

The requirements of their office are today as they were in the days of Paul, who wrote to Timothy:

"A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;

"Not given to wine, no striker [that is, not a bully or a violent person], . . . not a brawler, not covetous" (1 Timothy 3:2-3).

In his letter to Titus, Paul adds that "a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; . . .

"Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers" (Titus 1:7, 9).

### Example of a bishop's influence

All during the years of my childhood and youth, even until the time I was ordained an elder and came home from a mission, I had only one bishop. He was a remarkable man. He served for 25 years. We knew him, and he knew us. We always addressed him as "Bishop Duncan," and he always called us by our first names. We had great respect for him—an almost awesome respect. But we had no fear of him. We knew that he was our friend. His was a very large ward, and how very well he served his people.

I spoke at his funeral. Next to my own father, he probably had the greatest influence on my young life. How grateful I am for him.

Since then, I have had a number of bishops. Without exception, every one of them has been a dedicated and inspired leader.

### Role of bishops

Now let me say a few words directly to the bishops who are with us this night. And much of what I say to you might be echoed to the stake presidents and others in similar callings. I hope you know that I carry in my heart a great feeling of love for you. I know that your people love you. Tremendous is your trust. In calling you we have placed in you our total confidence.

We expect you to stand as the presiding high priest of the ward, a counselor to the people, a defender and helper of those in trouble, a comfort to those in sorrow, a supplier to those in need. We expect you to stand as a guardian and protector of the doctrine that is taught in your ward, of the quality of the teaching, of the filling of the many offices which are necessary.

Your personal behavior must be impeccable. You must be a man of integrity, above reproach of any kind. Your example will set the tone for the direction your people follow. You must be fearless in denouncing evil, willing to take a stand for the right, uncompromising in your defense of truth. While all of this requires firmness, it must be done with kindness and love.

You are the father of the ward and the guardian of your people. You must reach out to them in their times of sorrow and sickness and distress. You stand as president of the Aaronic Priesthood and with your counselors must give leadership to the deacons and the teachers and the priests to see that they grow in "the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4).

You are a husband to your wife, her beloved companion, her protector and provider. You are a father to your children and must nurture them with love and teach them with appreciation.

You may expect that the adversary will work on you. You, of all men, must exercise self-discipline, standing far apart from sin and evil of any kind in your own life. You must shun pornography, shut off the television set when it carries salacious entertainment, be pure in thought and deed.

You cannot use your office to further your business interests among your people, lest some accuse you of benefiting from your service as bishop.

You stand as a common judge in Israel. This is almost a terrifying responsibility. In some instances, you must determine even the eligibility of your people

to be members of the Church. You must determine their worthiness to receive baptism, their worthiness to be ordained to the Aaronic Priesthood, their eligibility to serve missions, and above all, their qualifications to enter the house of the Lord and partake of the blessings there to be had. You are to see that none goes hungry or without clothing or shelter. You must know the circumstances of all over whom you preside.

You must be a comforter and a guide to your people. Your door must be ever open to any cries of distress. Your back must be strong in sharing their burdens. You must reach out in love even to the wrongdoer.

### **Blessing for bishops**

My brethren, I invoke the blessings of the Almighty upon you in the great responsibility which you carry. May God bless you with health and strength. May He touch your mind with wisdom and understanding, with appreciation and love. May the interests of your people be the dominant concern of your life, without sacrificing the demands of your employment or the proper attention given your family.

I thank the Lord for each of you. I love you for what you do. I pray for you, every one of you, wherever you may be. I plead with you to shield yourselves from the darts of the adversary. I counsel you to put on the whole armor of God.

May the blessings of heaven come down upon your wives and your children. Someday you will be released. That will be a day of sadness. The memories of your people will remain throughout your life. They will sanctify your days and bring peace and rest and gladness. God bless you my beloved brethren, I humbly pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "The Spirit of God."  
Elder Richard E. Cook offered the benediction.

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## SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth general session of the 169th Annual General Conference commenced at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, April 4, 1999. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Jerold Ottley conducting and John Longhurst at the organ.

To begin the session, the choir sang "He Is Risen!" President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

### President Gordon B. Hinckley

My beloved brethren and sisters, we welcome you this beautiful Easter Sabbath morning to the fourth general session of the 169th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission. We are grateful to the owners and operators of these facilities who are broadcasting this conference.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders, and members of the Church who have assembled to worship together.

The music for this session will be given by the Tabernacle Choir under the direction of Jerold Ottley, with John Longhurst at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "He Is Risen!" and will now sing "With Humble Heart." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Duane B. Gerrard of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "With Humble Heart."  
Elder Duane B. Gerrard offered the invocation.

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### President Hinckley

We will now hear from President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

## President Thomas S. Monson

### Jesus taught in parables

When Jesus walked and taught among men, He spoke in language easily understood. Whether He was journeying along the dusty way from Perea to Jerusalem, addressing the multitudes on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, or pausing beside Jacob's well in Samaria, He taught in parables. Jesus spoke frequently of having hearts that could know and feel, ears that were capable of hearing, and eyes that could truly see.

### Example of a blind man

One not so blessed with the gift of sight was the blind man who, in an effort

to sustain himself, sat day in and day out at his usual place on the edge of a busy sidewalk in one of our large cities. In one hand he held an old felt hat filled with pencils. With his other hand he held out a tin cup. His simple appeal to the passerby was brief and to the point. It had a certain finality to it, almost a tone of despair. The message was contained on the small placard held about his neck by a string. It read, "I am blind."

Most did not stop to buy his pencils or to place a coin in the tin cup. They were too busy, too occupied by their own problems. That tin cup had never been filled or even half-filled. Then one beautiful spring day a man paused and, with a

marking pen, added several new words to the shabby sign. No longer did it read, "I am blind." Now the message read, "It is springtime and I am blind." The cup was soon filled to overflowing. Perhaps the busy people were touched by Charles L. O'Donnell's exclamation, "I have never been able to school my eyes against young April's blue surprise." To each, however, the coins were a poor substitute for the desired ability to actually restore sight.

### Different kinds of blindness

Each of us knows those who do not have sight. We also know many others who have their eyesight but who walk in darkness at noonday. These in this latter group may never carry the usual white cane and carefully make their way to the sound of the familiar "tap, tap, tap." They may not have a faithful Seeing Eye dog by their side nor carry a sign about their neck which reads, "I am blind," but blind they surely are. Some have been blinded by anger, others by indifference, by revenge, by hate, by prejudice, by ignorance, by neglect of precious opportunities. Of such the Lord said, "Their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."<sup>1</sup>

Well might each lament, "It is springtime, the gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored, and yet I am blind." Some, like the friend of Philip of old, call out, "How can I [find my way], except some man should guide me?"<sup>2</sup>

Many years ago, while attending a stake conference, I noticed that a counselor in the stake presidency was blind. He functioned beautifully, performing his duties as though he had sight. It was a stormy night as we met in the stake office situated on the second floor of the

building. Suddenly there was a loud clap of thunder. The lights in the building almost immediately went out. Instinctively I reached out for our sightless leader, and I said, "Here, take my arm and I will help you down the stairway."

I'm certain he must have had a smile on his face as he responded, "No, Brother Monson, give me *your* arm, that I might help *you*." And he added, "You are now in *my* territory."

The storm abated, the lights returned, but I shall never forget the trek down those stairs, guided by the man who was sightless yet filled with light.

### Jesus heals a blind man

Long ago and at a place far distant, as Jesus passed by He saw a man who was blind from birth. His disciples questioned the Master as to why this person was blind. Had he sinned or had his parents sinned, causing him to have this affliction?

"Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. . . .

"As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

"When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay,

"And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam. . . . He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing."<sup>3</sup>

A great dispute ensued among the Pharisees concerning this miracle:

"Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this man [Jesus] is a sinner.

"He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see."<sup>4</sup>

### Peter denies Christ, receives new birth

One thinks of the fisherman called Simon, better known to you and to me as Peter, chief among the Apostles. Doubting, disbelieving, impetuous Peter, in fulfillment of the Master's prophecy, indeed did deny Him thrice. Amidst the pushing, the jeers, and the blows, "the Lord in the agony of His humiliation, in the majesty of His silence, . . . 'turned and looked upon Peter.'"<sup>55</sup> As one chronologist described the change: "It was enough. . . . [Peter] 'knew no more danger, he feared no more death.' . . . [He] rushed forth into the night . . . 'to meet the morning dawn.' . . . This broken-hearted penitent [stood] before the tribunal of his own conscience, and there his old life, his old shame, his old weakness, his old self was doomed to that death of godly sorrow which was to issue in a new and a [nobler] birth."<sup>56</sup>

### "Put on the new man"

The Apostle Paul had a similar experience to that of Peter. From the day of his conversion until the day of his death, Paul urged men to "put off . . . the old man" and to "put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."<sup>57</sup>

Simon the fisherman had become Peter the Apostle. Saul the persecutor had become Paul the proselyter.

The passage of time has not altered the capacity of the Redeemer to change men's lives. As He said to the dead Lazarus, so He says to you and to me: "Come forth."<sup>58</sup>

### All have the Light of Christ

Said President Harold B. Lee: "Every soul who walks the earth, wherever he lives, in whatever nation he may have been born, no matter whether he be in riches or in poverty, had at birth an endowment of that first light which is called the Light of Christ, the Spirit of

Truth, or the Spirit of God—that universal light of intelligence with which every soul is blessed. Moroni spoke of that Spirit when he said:

"For behold, the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil; wherefore, I show unto you the way to judge; for every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God."<sup>59</sup>

You and I know those who qualify for the Savior's blessing in accordance with this definition.

### Example of seeing Christ in others

Such was Walter Stover of Salt Lake City. Born in Germany, Walter embraced the gospel message and came to America. He established his own business. He gave freely of his time and of his means.

Following World War II Walter Stover was called to return to his native land. He directed the Church in that nation and blessed the lives of all whom he met and with whom he served. With his own funds he constructed two chapels in Berlin—a beautiful city that had been so devastated by the conflict. He planned a gathering in Dresden for all the members of the Church from that nation and then chartered a train to bring them from all around the land so they could meet, partake of the sacrament, and bear witness of the goodness of God to them.

At the funeral services for Walter Stover, his son-in-law Thomas C. LeDuc said of him, "He had the ability to see Christ in every face he encountered, and he acted accordingly."

### Must have light to give light

The poet wrote:

I met a stranger in the night, whose lamp had ceased to shine;

I paused and let him light his lamp  
from mine.

A tempest sprang up later on, and  
shook the world about,  
And when the wind was gone, my lamp  
was out.

But back came to me the stranger—his  
lamp was glowing fine;  
He held the precious flame and lighted  
mine.<sup>10</sup>

Perhaps the moral of this poem is  
simply that if you want to give a light to  
others, you have to glow yourself.

### Joseph Smith's First Vision

When the Prophet Joseph Smith  
went into a grove of trees made sacred  
by what occurred there, he described the  
event:

"It was on the morning of a beautiful,  
clear day, early in the spring of eighteen  
hundred and twenty. It was the first time  
in my life that I had made such an attempt,  
for amidst all my anxieties I had never as  
yet made the attempt to pray vocally."<sup>11</sup>

After enduring a harrowing experi-  
ence from an unseen power, Joseph con-  
tinued:

"I saw a pillar of light exactly over  
my head, above the brightness of the  
sun, which descended gradually until it  
fell upon me. . . .

" . . . When the light rested upon me  
I saw two Personages, whose brightness  
and glory defy all description, standing  
above me in the air. One of them spake  
unto me, calling me by name and said,  
pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved  
Son. Hear Him!*"<sup>12</sup>

Joseph listened. Joseph learned.

On occasion I will be asked, "Brother  
Monson, if the Savior appeared to you,  
what questions would you ask of Him?"

My reply is always the same: "I would  
ask no question of Him. Rather, I would  
listen!"

### A blind man seeks a blessing for sight

Late one evening on a Pacific isle, a  
small boat slipped silently to its berth at  
the crude pier. Two Polynesian women  
helped Meli Mulipola from the boat and  
guided him to the well-worn pathway  
leading to the village road. The women  
marveled at the bright stars which twin-  
kled in the midnight sky. The friendly  
moonlight guided them along their way.  
However, Meli Mulipola could not ap-  
preciate these delights of nature—the  
moon, the stars, the sky—for he was blind.

His vision had been normal until  
that fateful day when, while working on  
a pineapple plantation, light turned sud-  
denly to darkness and day became per-  
petual night. He had learned of the  
restoration of the gospel and the teach-  
ings of The Church of Jesus Christ of  
Latter-day Saints. His life had been  
brought into compliance with these  
teachings.

He and his loved ones had made this  
long voyage, having learned that one  
who held the priesthood of God was vis-  
iting among the islands. He sought a  
blessing under the hands of those who  
held the sacred priesthood. His wish was  
granted. Tears streamed from his sight-  
less eyes and coursed down his brown  
cheeks, tumbling finally upon his native  
dress. He dropped to his knees and  
prayed: "Oh, God, thou knowest I am  
blind. Thy servants have blessed me that  
if it be thy will, my sight may return.  
Whether in thy wisdom I see light or  
whether I see darkness all the days of my  
life, I will be eternally grateful for the  
truth of thy gospel which I now see and  
which provides me the light of life."

He arose to his feet, thanked us for  
providing the blessing, and disappeared  
into the dark of the night. Silently he  
came; silently he departed. But his pres-  
ence I shall never forget. I reflected upon

the message of the Master: "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."<sup>13</sup>

### Temples reflect the Light of Christ

Today is a day of temple building. Never before have so many temples been erected and dedicated. President Gordon B. Hinckley, God's prophet on this earth, has a vision of the vital ordinances performed in such houses of the Lord. Temples will bless all who attend them and who sacrifice for their completion. The light of Christ will shine on all—even those who have gone beyond.

President Joseph F. Smith, speaking of work for the dead, declared, "Through our efforts in their behalf their chains of bondage will fall from them, and the darkness surrounding them will clear away, that light may shine upon them and they shall hear in the spirit world of the work that has been done for them by their children here, and will rejoice with you in your performance of these duties."<sup>14</sup>

The Apostle Paul urged, "Be thou an example of the believers."<sup>15</sup> And from James: "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."<sup>16</sup>

### Trust the true light

I close with the words of the poet Minnie Louise Haskins, who wrote:

And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year:

"Give me a light, that I may tread safely into the unknown!"

And he replied:

"Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God.

That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way."

So, I went forth, and finding the Hand of God, trod gladly into the night.

And He led me toward the hills and the breaking of day in the lone East.<sup>17</sup>

On this Easter morning and always, may our light so shine that we glorify our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, whose name is the only name under heaven whereby we might be saved. That we may ever walk in the footsteps of Jesus Christ is my humble prayer, in His holy name, amen.

### NOTES

1. Matthew 13:15.
2. Acts 8:31.
3. John 9:3, 5-7.
4. John 9:24-25.
5. Frederic W. Farrar, *The Life of Christ* (1874), 580; Luke 22:61.
6. *The Life of Christ*, 581.
7. Ephesians 4:22, 24.
8. John 11:43.
9. Harold B. Lee, *Stand Ye in Holy Places* (1974), 115; Moroni 7:16.
10. Author unknown.
11. Joseph Smith—History 1:14.
12. Joseph Smith—History 1:16-17; italics in original.
13. John 8:12.
14. In Conference Report, Oct. 1916, 6.
15. 1 Timothy 4:12.
16. James 1:22.
17. From "The Gate of the Year," in James Dalton Morrison, ed., *Masterpieces of Religious Verse* (1948), 92.

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The choir sang "When Saints Unite to Sing God's Praise."

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### President Hinckley

President Monson has just spoken to us, followed by the choir singing "When Saints Unite to Sing God's Praise."

Our next speaker will be President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.



## President Boyd K. Packer

Last night in the priesthood session, President Hinckley gave a tribute, counsel, and a blessing to our bishops. Under the rule of two witnesses, explained to us by Elder Oaks yesterday, I stand as a second witness.

### A bishop abandons his own work to help

Years ago I served on a stake high council with Emery Wight. For 10 years Emery had served as bishop of rural Harper Ward. His wife, Lucille, became our stake Relief Society president.

Lucille told me that one spring morning a neighbor called at her door and asked for Emery. She told him that he was out plowing. The neighbor then spoke with great concern. Earlier that morning he had passed the field and noticed Emery's team of horses standing in a half-finished furrow with the reins draped over the plow. Emery was nowhere in sight. The neighbor thought nothing of it until much later when he passed the field again, and the team had not moved. He climbed the fence and crossed the field to the horses. Emery was nowhere to be found. He hurried to the house to check with Lucille.

Lucille calmly replied, "Oh, don't be alarmed. No doubt someone is in trouble and came to get the bishop."

The image of that team of horses standing for hours in the field symbolizes the dedication of the bishops in the Church and of the counselors who stand by their side. Every bishop and every counselor, figuratively speaking, leaves his team standing in an unfinished furrow when someone needs help.

I have passed that field many times over the years. It is a reminder of the sacrifice and the service of those called to serve in bishoprics of wards and of their wives and families, without whose help they could not serve.

Recently, very early on a Sunday morning, I stood in that field. I looked up toward the home where Emery and Lucille reared their children and to the foothills beyond. As a boy, with other Scouts I left that home with Bishop Wight. We hiked into the hills, with Emery teaching us every step of the way.

### Responsibilities of bishops

"A bishop," Paul wrote to Timothy, "must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach."<sup>1</sup>

Those words *apt to teach* have special meaning. *Apt* means "inclined, ready, prepared."

In all the world there is nothing quite like the office of bishop in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Except for parents, the bishop has the best opportunity to teach and to cause to be taught the things that matter most. And a bishop has the remarkable opportunity to teach parents about their responsibility; then he must allow them time to teach their children.

The bishop is responsible for the young men of the Aaronic Priesthood and for the young women as well. He receives and accounts for tithes and offerings. He is responsible for the temporal affairs of the Church, to seek out the poor, and he has many other duties.

The bishop is "to judge his people by the testimony of the just, and by the assistance of his counselors, according to the laws of the kingdom which are given by the prophets of God."<sup>2</sup> He is to judge them as to their worthiness to receive the ordinances and serve in offices.

He is to counsel and correct and to preach the gospel to his flock, individually and collectively. In all of this, he is to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Crucifixion, the Atonement, the Resurrection, the Restoration.

## Bishops are called and ordained

I have heard this described as voluntary service because neither the bishop nor his counselors are paid for what they do. They too pay their tithes and offerings, and they devote endless hours to their calling. They are paid only in blessings, as are those who serve with them.

But one does not exactly volunteer or aspire to be bishop. He is *called* to be bishop, "called of God, by prophecy." Then he is both ordained and set apart "by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof."

A man is *ordained* a bishop, an office in the priesthood; then he is *set apart* and given the keys to preside over a ward. He with his two counselors form a bishopric—a type of presidency.

Once ordained, he is a bishop for the rest of his life. When he is released from presiding over a ward, his ordination becomes dormant. If called again to preside over a ward, his previous ordination is reactivated. When he is released, it becomes dormant again.

## Right to revelation

Inherent in the ordination to be bishop is both the right and the obligation to be directed by inspiration. The bishop has the power to discern by the Spirit what he is to do.

Revelation is the one credential that all bishops have in common. Bishops come from many cultures, many occupations. They vary in experience, personality, and age, but they do not differ in their right to be guided spiritually.

Years ago a friend of mine went to a large university to study under the ranking authority in the field of counseling and guidance. This professor quickly took an interest in this personable, intelligent young Latter-day Saint. He attracted attention as he moved through the course work required for a doctor's degree.

He chose the Latter-day Saint bishop as the subject for his dissertation. All went well until he described the ordination of a bishop, the power of discernment, and the right of a bishop to spiritual guidance.

His doctoral committee felt that such references had no place in a scholarly paper, and they insisted that he take them out. He thought he might at least say that Latter-day Saints *believe* the bishop has spiritual insight. But the committee denied him even this, for they would be quite embarrassed to have this spiritual ingredient included in a scholarly dissertation.

He was told that with some little accommodation—specifically, leaving out all the references to revelation—his dissertation would be published and his reputation established.

He did the best he could. His dissertation did not contain enough about the Spirit to satisfy him and too much to be fully accepted by his worldly professors. But he received his degree.

I asked this friend what was the most important thing he had learned in his study of bishops. He answered, "I learned that the mantle is far, far greater than the intellect, that the priesthood is the guiding power."

## Be considerate of a bishop's time

Do not doubt that an ordinary soul called from the ranks to be bishop can give inspired counsel and correction. Unfortunately, some who could be helped so much are reluctant to seek counsel from the bishop, while others endlessly seem to need counseling and comfort and feel neglected if they are not constantly tended.

Bishops are inspired! Each of us has agency to accept or reject counsel from our leaders, but never disregard the counsel of your bishop, whether given over the pulpit or individually, and never turn down a call from your bishop.

It can be a tough world, a tough life, and in some ways it's even tougher in the Church. Eliza R. Snow wrote:

Think not when you gather to Zion,  
Your troubles and trials are through,  
That nothing but comfort and pleasure  
Are waiting in Zion for you:  
No, no, 'tis designed as a furnace,  
All substance, all textures to try,  
To burn all the 'wood . . . and [the]  
stubble,'  
The gold from the dross purify. . . .

Think not when you gather to Zion,  
The Saints here have nothing to do  
But to look to your personal welfare,  
And always be comforting you.  
No; those who are faithful are doing  
What they find to do with their might;  
To gather the scattered of Israel  
They labor by day and by night.<sup>4</sup>

When we need help the bishop is there, but be careful not to impose unnecessarily upon his time. Bishops can do only so much. The bishopric must have time to make a living and time for their own families.

### **The Church is no bigger than a ward**

Often we are asked how the relatively few Apostles in the First Presidency and the Twelve can manage the Church, now more than 10 million strong.

Actually the Church is no bigger than a ward. Each bishop has counselors. He wears a special mantle and is designated as the presiding high priest in the ward. There are other high priests, and there is a presidency of elders. There are auxiliary leaders and teachers sufficient for the need. When we serve obediently, ever willingly, our pay, like the bishop's, comes in blessings.

No matter if the Church grows to be a hundred million (as it surely will!), it will still be no bigger than a ward. Everything needed for our redemption, save for the

temple, is centered there—and temples now come ever closer to all of us.

Small numbers of wards are grouped together under the shelter of stakes and branches under districts. There is a stake presidency and a council to train the bishopric and other leaders to train those who serve with them.

This organization, in place across the world, is a product of the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This miracle of willing service is possible because of individual testimonies of the Redeemer.

The revelation, present when this system was conceived, did not end there, for the purpose of it all is to shelter families. Families are grouped together in a ward or branch.

It is the responsibility of the bishop to see that each family is bound together in enduring covenants and each individual is safe and happy. The system works best when the bishop recognizes the preeminent responsibility of parents.

### **Parents' responsibilities to family**

While the bishop is sometimes referred to as the "father of the ward," we should remember he is not called to rear the children of the ward.

Our handbooks state:

"Parents have primary responsibility for the welfare of their children.<sup>5</sup> The bishopric and other ward leaders support but do not replace them in this responsibility."<sup>6</sup>

"Quorums, auxiliaries, programs, and activities in the Church should strengthen and support the family. They should enhance gospel-centered family activities, not compete with them."<sup>7</sup>

The First Presidency recently wrote to the Church:

"The home is the basis of a righteous life, and no other instrumentality can take its place or fulfill its essential functions in carrying forward this God-given responsibility. . . .

"... However worthy and appropriate other demands or activities may be, they must not be permitted to displace the divinely-appointed duties that only parents and families can adequately perform."<sup>8</sup>

Families, like wards, vary in size and shape. Time moves on; one generation replaces another. Babies are born and mature to become parents and then grandparents. One family divides itself to become several. Wards grow and are divided. Where there was one, there are others.

Whatever happens in the world, whatever heights of civility or depths of depravity emerge in society, the plan remains unaltered. The Church will grow until it fills the whole earth. At once it will remain no bigger than the ward.

The Church provides activities and associations and ordinances and ordinations and covenants and contracts and corrections which prepare each of us for exaltation. It follows a pattern made in the heavens, for no mortal mind could have designed it.

Now and always hereafter, ordinary men will leave their teams standing in an unfinished furrow, the reins draped over the plow, when someone needs help. The women and children serve with them and will sustain them supplied with truth from the books of revelation, the gem of them all being the Book of Mormon, which testifies of Christ, of the Atone-

ment, of His Resurrection; and I testify of Him. Sheltered in the ward within the plan which He revealed, we with our families will be safe. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

- 1 Timothy 3:2.
- Doctrine and Covenants 58:18; italics added.
- Articles of Faith 1:5.
- "Think Not, When You Gather to Zion," *Hymns* (1948), no. 21, vv. 1, 3.
- See Doctrine and Covenants 68:25-28.
- Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 2: Priesthood and Auxiliary Leaders* (1998), 178.
- Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 2*, 299.
- First Presidency letter, 11 Feb. 1999, cited in *Church News*, 27 Feb. 1999, 3.

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The choir sang "He Died! The Great Redeemer Died."

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#### President Hinckley

Elder Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve, has just spoken to us. The choir has sung "He Died! The Great Redeemer Died."

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder Marlin K. Jensen of the Presidency of the Seventy.

### Elder Marlin K. Jensen

Good morning, brothers and sisters.

Although, candidly, one is never completely comfortable with an assignment like this, I do sincerely appreciate the opportunity to speak to all of you on this beautiful Easter morning.

My wise father once told me that if I listened carefully to what people talk about from the pulpit in church, I would

know which principles of the gospel were of concern to them and those with which they might be struggling at any given time. Through the years my father's observation has caused me to be very careful in the choice of subjects about which I speak! Nevertheless, I have an admission to make today. Since President Gordon B. Hinckley shared with us the

three fundamental needs every new member of the Church has for a friend, a responsibility, and nourishing by the good word of God, I have been personally concerned about my performance as a friend.

### **Friendship is a fundamental need**

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that "friendship is one of the grand fundamental principles of 'Mormonism.'"<sup>1</sup> That thought ought to inspire and motivate all of us because I feel that friendship is a fundamental need of our world. I think in all of us there is a profound longing for friendship, a deep yearning for the satisfaction and security that close and lasting relationships can give. Perhaps one reason the scriptures make little specific mention of the principle of friendship is because it should be manifest quite naturally as we live the gospel. In fact, if the consummate Christian attribute of charity has a first cousin, it is friendship. To paraphrase the Apostle Paul slightly, friendship "suffereth long, and is kind; [friendship] envieth not; . . . seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; . . . [friendship] never faileth."<sup>2</sup>

### **Friendship starts at home**

Like so much of what is worthwhile in life, our needs for friendship are often best met in the home. If our children feel friendship within the family, with each other, and with parents, they will not be desperate for acceptance outside the family. I think one of life's most satisfying accomplishments for my wife and me is to have lived long enough to see our children become good friends. It's definitely a miracle that those in our family who in younger years occasionally threatened one another with serious bodily harm now seek out and genuinely enjoy each other's friendship. Similarly, I think no finer compliment can be paid to parents

than to have children say that their parents are among their best friends.

Friendship is also a vital and wonderful part of courtship and marriage. A relationship between a man and a woman that begins with friendship and then ripens into romance and eventually marriage will usually become an enduring, eternal friendship. Nothing is more inspiring in today's world of easily dissolved marriages than to observe a husband and wife quietly appreciating and enjoying each other's friendship year in and year out as they experience together the blessings and trials of mortality. A recently published report on 25 years of landmark marital research finds that "the linchpin of a lasting marriage . . . is a simple concept with a profound impact: friendship."<sup>3</sup> In a poignant letter written by the Prophet Joseph Smith to his wife, Emma, during the separations and tribulations of Missouri, he comforted her by saying, "Oh my affectionate Emma, I want you to remember that I am a true and faithful friend, to you and the children, forever."<sup>4</sup>

### **Church organization fosters friendship**

The inspired organization of the Church also fosters friendships. From our youngest to our oldest years we are in settings where friendship and sociality can flourish. In interviews, meetings, classes, quorums, councils, activities, and a variety of other opportunities for association, we can make friends and find understanding. The salutation prescribed for greeting the elders attending the School of the Prophets in Kirtland expresses the spirit of friendship that might well serve as a creed for each of us: "I receive you to fellowship, in a determination that is fixed, immovable, and unchangeable, to be your friend . . . through the grace of God in the bonds of love."<sup>5</sup>

### Friendship needed to serve, teach

All of our interactions in the Church are made more enjoyable and productive when they are accompanied by genuine feelings of friendship. A teacher of the gospel, for instance, who doesn't befriend his or her students will seldom teach with lasting influence and effect. I still treasure a one-sentence entry in my high school yearbook in which a seminary teacher I loved and from whom I learned much told me he was grateful to be my friend.

A bishop, no matter how skilled in administrative matters, must be a friend to children, youth, and adults if he is to help them reach their spiritual potential. I was touched once when a young woman I knew went to her bishop to confess a serious transgression. She had been worried about how the bishop might react to her deviation from the gospel path and had only gone to him after considerable urging. When I asked her afterward what his response had been, she told me with great emotion that her bishop had wept with her and that in working with him to gain the Lord's forgiveness, she now considered her bishop to be one of her best friends.

### Reach out to others

There is a particular challenge we face as Latter-day Saints in establishing and maintaining friendships. Because our commitment to marriage, family, and the Church is so strong, we often feel challenged by constraints of time and energy in reaching out in friendship to others beyond that core group. I experienced this dilemma personally in recent days as I tried to steal a few moments at home to prepare this talk. Twice, friends from my past whom I love dearly but see only occasionally dropped in to visit. During what ought to have been choice times of reunion and reminiscence, I ironically found myself growing inwardly

impatient for the visits to end so that I could get back to writing my talk about friendship!

I have since felt ashamed. How selfish we can be. How unwilling to be inconvenienced, to give, to bless and be blessed. What kind of parents or neighbors or servants of the Lord Jesus Christ can we be without being a friend? In this information age, is not friendship still the best technology for sharing the truths and way of life we cherish? Is not our reluctance voluntarily to reach out to others in friendship a significant obstacle to helping God accomplish His eternal purposes?

### Sincere friendship at core of fellowship

Years ago when I was serving as a bishop, a recently converted family moved into our rural Utah community. These good people had joined the Church in the eastern United States and had been warmly fellowshiped and put to work in a small branch there. When they came to our larger, more-established ward, they somehow slipped through the cracks. Some of the family members, particularly the father, became disenchanted with the Church and its members.

One Sunday morning when I noticed the father was missing from priesthood meeting, I left the meetinghouse and drove to his home. He invited me in, and we had a very honest conversation about the struggle he was having with his new faith and neighbors. After exploring various possibilities for responding to his concerns, none of which seemed to appeal to him very much, I asked him with a tone of frustration in my voice just what we could do to help him. I've never forgotten his reply:

"Well, bishop," he said (and I will need to paraphrase here slightly), "for heaven's sake, whatever you do, please don't assign me a *friend*."

I learned a great lesson that day. No one wants to become a "project"; we all

want spontaneously to be loved. And, if we are to have friends, we want them to be genuine and sincere, not "assigned."

### Be a friend

Brothers and sisters, my message today is very simple: if we truly want to be tools in the hands of our Heavenly Father in bringing to pass His eternal purposes, we need only to be a friend. Consider the power of each one of us, 10 million strong, of our own free will and choice reaching out to those not yet of our faith in unconditional friendship. We would no longer be accused of offering warm bread and a cold shoulder. Imagine the consequences for good if each active family in the Church offered consistent concern and genuine friendship to a less-active family or a new-member family. The power is in each one of us to be a friend. Old and young, rich and poor, educated and humble, in every language and country, we all have the capacity to be a friend.

Our Savior, shortly before His Crucifixion, said to His disciples: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends."<sup>6</sup> Having been so richly blessed by Christ's friendship, I pray that we will now be to others what He is to us: a true friend. At no time will we be more Christ-like than when we are a friend. I testify of the inestimable value of friends in my own

life and express my gratitude to all of them this morning. I know that when we offer ourselves in friendship, we make a most significant contribution to God's work and to the happiness and progress of His children. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 316.
2. 1 Corinthians 13:4-5, 8.
3. John Gottman, as cited in Karen S. Peterson, "Friendship Makes Marriages a Success," *USA Today*, 1 Apr. 1999, p. 1D.
4. Quoted in Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 5 vols. (1992), 3:1345.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 88:133.
6. John 15:13-14.

### President Hinckley

Elder Marlin K. Jensen of the Presidency of the Seventy has just spoken to us.

The choir and congregation will now sing "Jesus, Once of Humble Birth." Following the singing, Sister Sheri L. Dew, second counselor in the Relief Society general presidency, will address us. She will be followed by Elder David B. Haight of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

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The choir and congregation sang "Jesus, Once of Humble Birth."

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## Sister Sheri L. Dew

### Christ offers salvation to all

In His last discourse to His disciples prior to Gethsemane and Calvary, the Savior declared that He was "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). On this beautiful Easter morning, I testify with the prophet Alma that "there is no other

way . . . whereby man can be saved, only in and through Christ" (Alma 38:9).

The Savior's Atonement is stunningly inclusive! "For as in Adam *all* die, even so in Christ shall *all* be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22; italics added). Come one, come all, the Lord has invited. The gospel of Jesus Christ is for every man and

woman, boy and girl. He doesn't change the rules for the rich or the poor, the married or unmarried, the Portuguese or the Chinese. The gospel is for *every one* of us, and the spiritual requirements and rewards are universal. In matters pertaining to salvation, "*all are alike unto God*" (2 Nephi 26:33; italics added). The Lord's motives stand in stark contrast to those of Lucifer, who is obsessed with attempting to make us feel less than who we are as sons and daughters of God. He despises a consecrated people and delights at obscuring our vision and enticing us away from the path that leads back to our heavenly home.

### Example of losing the way

As a young BYU student I learned a little something about staying on course when heading home. One Christmas Eve my brother and I left to drive home to Kansas. But early in our journey we learned that a huge snowstorm was heading our way, so we pulled out a map, identified a detour that would skirt the edge of the storm, and headed into parts unknown. Our creative navigating proved dangerous. Our new route was unfamiliar, and we still ran right into the blizzard. To make matters worse, late that night as we were creeping along in blinding snow on an obscure highway, our old Ford quit. We were stranded. And we had absolutely no idea where we were.

Eventually we caught a ride to the nearest town, where we found that we were still hours from home and marooned in Last Chance, Colorado. At that point there was only one thing to do. We called home for help. In the middle of the night our father left to come and rescue us. By the next afternoon we were all safely home.

I'll never forget Christmas Eve in Last Chance, where we were immobilized by a problem largely of our own making and one we were unequipped to solve. That day our father did for us what we could not do for ourselves. Now, each one of us is

on the path towards our eternal home. And for various reasons we all need rescue—rescue from loneliness and heartache, from despair and disillusionment, from the consequences of innocent mistakes and blatant sin.

### The Savior is the only chance

Where do we turn for help? "In the gift of his Son hath God prepared a more excellent way" (Ether 12:11). The Savior isn't our last chance; He is our only chance. Our only chance to overcome self-doubt and catch a vision of who we may become. Our only chance to repent and have our sins washed clean. Our only chance to purify our hearts, subdue our weaknesses, and avoid the adversary. Our only chance to obtain redemption and exaltation. Our only chance to find peace and happiness in this life and eternal life in the world to come.

Left to his own devices, the natural man inevitably succumbs to Satan (see Mosiah 3:19), who abandons his prey once he lures them from the straight and narrow path. But the Savior will guide those who follow Him *all* the way home. Lehi's family endured an intense wilderness experience designed to teach, test, and sanctify them. Likewise, the path from our former home to eternal life runs right through this earthly wilderness, where we may expect similar challenges and difficulties. But in our journey we are not alone, for the Lord's promise to Nephi is the same to us: "I will prepare the way before you, [and] inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments ye shall be led towards the promised land. . . . After ye have arrived . . . ye shall know that . . . the Lord, did deliver you" (1 Nephi 17:13–14).

### The Lord knows the way, is the way

The Lord knows the way because He *is* the way and is our only chance for successfully negotiating mortality. His Atonement makes available all of the



power, peace, light, and strength that we need to deal with life's challenges—those ranging from our own mistakes and sins to trials over which we have no control but we still feel pain.

The Lord has promised to heal our broken hearts and “to set at liberty them that are bruised” (Luke 4:18); to give power to the faint, to heal the wounded soul, and to turn our weakness into strength (see Isaiah 40:29; Jacob 2:8; Ether 12:27); to take upon Him our pains and sicknesses, to blot out our transgressions if we repent, and loose the bands of death (see Alma 7:11–13). He promised that if we will build our lives upon His rock, the devil will have no power over us (see Helaman 5:12). And He has vowed that He will never leave us or forsake us (see Hebrews 13:5). There is simply no mortal equivalent. Not in terms of commitment, power, or love. He is our only chance.

### **Activate the power of the Atonement**

Our responsibility is to learn to draw upon the power of the Atonement. Otherwise we walk through mortality relying solely on our own strength. And to do that is to invite the frustration of failure and to refuse the most resplendent gift in time or eternity. “For what doth it profit a man if a gift is bestowed . . . and he receive not the gift?” (D&C 88:33). My brother and I would have been foolish to not seek or accept our father's help when we were stranded. Likewise, the Lord is our advocate, and He “knoweth the weakness of man and how to succor them who are tempted” (D&C 62:1). In other words, He knows how to succor *all* of us. But we activate the power of the Atonement in our lives. We do this by first believing in Him, by repenting, by obeying His commandments, by partaking of sacred ordinances and keeping covenants, and by seeking after Him in fasting and prayer, in the scriptures, and in the temple.

All of which requires our faith in the Lord. President Gordon B. Hinckley has said that “if there is any one thing you and I need . . . , it is faith.”<sup>1</sup> To have faith in Christ is to believe in Him, follow Him, and rely on Him. And it is to be blessed with the peace of conscience and mind that the Apostle Paul spoke of when he said, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:13).

### **Being happy when life is hard**

Not long ago the Relief Society general presidency was asked to meet with two journalists from eastern Europe who were intrigued about service performed by our sisters in their country. We explained that from its earliest days this grand organization of righteous women has sought to not only “relieve the poor but to save souls.”<sup>2</sup> When they asked if we help women with their “emotional problems,” explaining that many in their country were discouraged, we responded that in Relief Society we study the doctrines of the gospel, and the gospel teaches us how to be happy even when life is hard. One of the reporters was incredulous: “Is it possible?” she asked. “Is it possible to be happy when life is hard?” Her question tugged at me, for I knew that she did not know where to turn for peace.

Is it possible to be happy when life is hard? To feel peace amid uncertainty and hope in the midst of cynicism? Is it possible to change, to shake off old habits and become new again? Is it possible to live with integrity and purity in a world that no longer values the virtues that distinguish the followers of Christ?

Yes. The answer is yes because of Jesus Christ, whose Atonement ensures that we need not bear the burdens of mortality alone. There is nothing this confused world needs more, nothing that inspires a greater sense of well-being, nothing that has greater power to

strengthen families than the gospel of Jesus Christ. President Howard W. Hunter said, "Whatever Jesus lays his hands upon lives. If Jesus lays his hands upon a marriage, it lives. If he is allowed to lay his hands on the family, it lives."<sup>3</sup> The Savior will do for *each* of us what He has promised to do—if we will have faith in Him and receive His gift.

### Jesus Christ is the only answer

Through the years I, like you, have experienced pressures and disappointments that would have crushed me had I not been able to draw upon a source of wisdom and strength far greater than my own. He has never forgotten or forsaken me, and I have come to know for myself that Jesus is the Christ and that this is His Church. With Ammon I say: "[For] who can glory too much in the Lord? Yea, who can say too much of his great power, and of his mercy . . . ? Behold, . . . I cannot say the smallest part which I feel" (Alma 26:16). I testify that in this, the twilight of the dispensation of the fulness of times, when Lucifer is working

overtime to jeopardize our journey home and to separate us from the Savior's atoning power, the only answer for *any* of us is Jesus Christ.

May we recommit to seek after this Jesus of whom the prophets have testified. May we yoke ourselves to Him, draw liberally upon the matchless power of His Atonement, and rise up as sons and daughters of God and shake off the world. To "those who will have him to be their God" (1 Nephi 17:40), the Lord has extended a magnificent promise: "I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up" (D&C 84:88). Jesus Christ is our only chance. He will show us the way because He *is* the way, to which I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 186.
2. *Relief Society Minutebook*, 9 June 1842, 3.
3. In Conference Report, Oct. 1979, 93; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1979, 65.

## Elder David B. Haight

My dear brethren and sisters, what a beautiful day. What a wonderful day this is, what a wonderful time to be alive, and what a wonderful time to be a member of the Church.

Even though my eyesight isn't as good as it used to be, as I get older I find that my vision improves, that I see the larger picture more clearly as time goes on. I look at Ruby sitting over here, bless her heart; this year we will celebrate our 69th wedding anniversary. And so on this day, my heart is filled with gratitude for the blessings that I have received and for the influence that the Church has had upon me and my life, with Ruby by my side,

and for the sons that we have raised, Bruce and Robert, and our daughter, Karen, and their families. I can also see in my mind's eye at this time, not only here in Utah but in California and in Texas and in North Carolina and in Boston, great-grandchildren in front of the television. And they're probably saying, "That old guy up there is Grandpa. He's kind of looking old, isn't he? But he's our grandpa." And to all of them I express my love and gratitude.

### Love and service bring rewards

As I get older and as I look back upon the world and upon the life that I have

lived, I sense that it is the love that we share and the service that we render that really is the great payoff.

Some years ago near the end of a plane trip that I was on, on an assignment, the stewardess came along asking what we wanted as a refreshment, as a drink. And I told her that I would take a 7-Up or some lemon drink.

As she brought it to me and handed me the drink, she noticed my tie pin. And on my tie pin, which I have here in my hand—we were using these in the Scottish Mission years ago—there was the crest of the royal family of England. But in the center of that crest we had emblazed the London Temple. And so on this tie pin was the temple with that crest around it. As the stewardess handed me the 7-Up, she said, “My, that’s an unusual tie pin. What is on it?”

And I said, “That’s a temple.”

And this young lady said, “A temple? A temple of what?”

And I said, “A temple of the Lord.”

And she said, “A what?”

And I said, “It’s a temple of the Lord.”

And I could see some interest in her, and she said, “What church do you belong to?”

I told her of our Church, and then I said to her, because I could see there was some interest, “If you will give me your name and address, I will have some young men come by and call on you, and they will tell you about this temple and about temples.”

She looked at me rather strangely and walked away. Then in a few moments she came back and handed me a little slip of paper with her name, Penny Harryman, with a Los Angeles address.

I called the mission president, and I told him, as we always do, “Send two of your best. I want you to go out and visit with this young lady,” because I had said to her, “I’ll have some young men come and see you, and if you do what they will ask you to do and listen to them, I

promise you that you can have the greatest blessings that could come into your life.”

A little over a year later, a telephone call came into my office one day, and a girl’s voice said, “My name is Penny Harryman. Do you remember me?”

And I said, “Of course I do.”

She said, “Could you arrange to marry my fiancé and me in the Salt Lake Temple if we could arrange the time?”

I said, “Of course I would.”

And while I was sealing this young lady to this young man that she had met during that course of events, I found that her mother was walking around Temple Square in Salt Lake, wondering what we were doing to her daughter in the temple because she wasn’t permitted to be there.

As time goes on, it is the love that we give and the service that we render that becomes so important in our lives.

### Showing love for the Savior

Following the Resurrection we all know of those appearances that the Savior made—one of them was when He met with Peter and the fishermen on the shores of Galilee. It was evidently very early in the morning, and He called out and asked them if they were having any success. They said no, and He told them to cast the nets on the other side. And then in that account which is so beautifully recorded by John, they drew the nets in, and there were lots of fish.

The Savior was there. There was a fire, according to John’s account, and they ate fish and honeycomb or bread. And on that occasion, the Savior said to Peter, “Son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?” (John 21:15; see vv. 1–17). Undoubtedly He had pointed to those fish that were probably still jumping there in the net.

“Lovest thou me more than these?”

They were poor. They could take the fish and sell them, sell them for money, do something with them.

Peter said, indicating that the Savior knew all things, "Thou knowest that I love thee." And the Savior said to Peter, "Feed my lambs" (v. 15).

Then the second time, the Savior said to Peter, "Lovest thou me?" and Peter then was grieved because the Savior had asked him the second time, and the Savior said, "Feed my sheep" (v. 16).

Then the third time He asked him, "Lovest thou me? . . . Feed my sheep" (v. 17).

What are we doing? In attempting to prove to the Savior on this day which is so precious to all of us, when we celebrate, preach, and teach of the Resurrection and of the Savior breaking the bands of death, what are we doing and how do we demonstrate to the Savior the love we have for Him? Wouldn't it be through our obedience and through our service and what we do with the time that we have?

### Need for couple missionaries

I had an interesting letter the other day from a stake president down in the Phoenix, Arizona, area. He asked if I could arrange to come down sometime, and he'd arrange for a fireside. He wanted me to talk to the "snowbirds." He pointed out that hundreds of people, "snowbirds," fly into Arizona in the wintertime, coming from various parts of the United States to settle down there during the winter months. And he said, "They're retired now, wonderful people, well qualified. They come and are now in the wards." If you're a snowbird, you know, you can spend part of the time in Arizona and part of the time somewhere else, and so you're sort of free to do what you'd like to do.

Let me just remind all of you of the great need we have out in the world as the missionary program moves forward for couple missionaries to help strengthen the branches and the stakes throughout the world as we bring more people into the Church.

### Examples of missionary service

You all have probably heard much about the story of what happened in Mongolia when Ken Beesley was there and helped the government in establishing an institution of higher learning, teaching them about curriculum and administration, and in so doing he started opening the door for the Church.

You have also probably heard of President Gary Cox and his wife, Sister Joyce Cox, who were called to go there as missionaries and then as mission president and of the wonderful service that they rendered.

And then came Dr. John Bennett and his wife, Carolyn, who had served in Mongolia and who told of when they thought they were going to be called to the Canary Islands because someone there had invited them to come, but when their mission call came it was to Mongolia. They were astonished. I read some of their comments later on, of what had happened to them in Mongolia, all of the lives that they touched and the service that they rendered. And even though back home they'd had a brother die and they'd had children be married and have receptions, they said, "We were able to keep in touch with them by telephone while this was all going on."

Think of what has happened in Mongolia now, where we have some 1,300 members and nine branches.

I think also of Brother Ken Woolstenhulme and his wife, Sister Karren Woolstenhulme, from up in Oakley, Utah, who wanted to go out somewhere where the action was, and they were sent to Perth, Australia. They are now in a little branch more than 300 miles north of Perth, up in an area where they write and tell of the excitement that has come into their lives as they watch and are part of the development of the Church in that part of the world.

If you're retired and wondering what to do with those extra years, there's a

world out there of excitement. I think of Talmage Nielsen here in Salt Lake City, a retired doctor, and his wife, who served missions in both South America and in Frankfurt, Germany, helping us there with medical problems, as well as assisting with medical problems in Russia. After being home long enough to kiss the grandchildren hello and good-bye, they were then called to serve in Hawaii, where he was director of the visitors' center. I know the great time, experience, and blessings that they have had serving together in these three missions.

When I talked with him recently, I said, "Now what are you going to do with the rest of your life?"

And he said, "Well, I'm 72."

And I said, "You're 72? Well, I have 20 years on you! And when I think of what has happened to me in the last 20 years, Talmage, think of what you can still do as you go out into the world."

I leave you my witness, my testimony, that the gospel is true, that God lives, that He is our Father, and that in some miraculous way He reaches our hearts and our consciences regarding the truthfulness of this work. We sense it, we feel it,

and we feel of His love and His mercy regarding all of us.

May we live the principles of the gospel. May we use our time effectively, all of the time that we have, I humbly pray as I leave you my love and my witness of the truthfulness of this work in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "Our Savior's Love."

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### **President Hinckley**

Sister Sheri L. Dew, second counselor in the Relief Society presidency, has spoken to us, followed by Elder David B. Haight of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The choir then sang "Our Savior's Love." We express appreciation to the choir for the beautiful music they have provided this morning.

Following my remarks this session will conclude with the choir singing "Where Can I Turn for Peace?" The benediction will then be offered by Elder Wayne M. Hancock.

The concluding session of this conference will begin at 2:00 this afternoon.

## **President Gordon B. Hinckley**

### **Gratitude for the members**

My brothers and sisters, I feel so deeply grateful as I stand before you. Of all men, I feel so richly blessed. I am blessed by your love. Wherever I go, you are so very kind to me. I am blessed by your faith. Your tremendous service, your devotion, your loyalty—all become a part of my own faith. How really wonderful you are. It is plainly evident that the gospel, when lived, makes people better than they otherwise would be.

How unselfish you are with your time and your means. All across this broad

world you serve to build our Father's kingdom and to move His work forward.

I telephoned a man last week. He is retired. He has served as a mission president, and he and his wife are now serving as missionaries. I asked him if they would be willing to go to preside over a new temple. He broke down with emotion. He was overcome. He could not talk. He and his wife will leave their children and grandchildren for another long period to serve the Lord in another capacity. Will they miss their grandchildren? Of course they will. But they will go, and they will serve faithfully.

How deeply grateful I am for the devotion and the loyalty of the members of the Church throughout the earth who respond to every call, no matter the inconvenience, no matter what comfort they must forgo.

### Gratitude for Jesus Christ

But of all the things for which I feel grateful, I am most thankful this Easter morning for the gift of my Lord and my Redeemer. This is Easter, when, with all of Christendom, we commemorate the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

This was not an ordinary thing. It was the greatest event in human history. I do not hesitate to say that.

"If a man die, shall he live again?" asked Job (Job 14:14). There is no question of greater importance than this.

### No one escapes death

Those of us who live in comfort and security seldom give any thought to death. Our minds are on other things. Yet there is nothing more certain, nothing more universal, nothing more final than the closure of mortal life. No one can escape it, not one.

I have stood at the tomb of Napoleon in Paris, at the tomb of Lenin in Moscow, and before the burial places of many others of the great leaders of the earth. In their time they commanded armies; they ruled with almost omnipotent power; their very words brought terror into the hearts of people. I have reverently walked through some of the great cemeteries of the world. I have reflected quietly and thoughtfully as I have stood in the military cemetery in Manila in the Philippines where are buried some 17,000 Americans who gave their lives in the Second World War and where are remembered another 35,000 who died in the terrible battles of the Pacific and whose

remains were never found. I have walked with reverence through the British cemetery on the outskirts of Rangoon, Burma, and noted the names of hundreds of young men who came from the villages, towns, and great cities of the British Isles and gave their lives in hot and distant places. I have strolled through old cemeteries in Asia and Europe and yet other places and reflected on the lives of those who were once buoyant and happy, who were creative and distinguished, who gave much to the world in which they lived. They have all passed into the oblivion of the grave. All who have lived upon the earth before us are now gone. They have left all behind as they have stepped over the threshold of silent death. None has escaped. All have walked their way to "the undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveler returns" (*Hamlet*, act 3, scene 1, lines 79–80). Shakespeare so described it.

### Through Jesus Christ all live

But Jesus the Christ changed all that. Only a God could do what He did. He broke the bonds of death. He too had to die, but on the third day following His burial, He rose from the grave, "the first-fruits of them that slept" (1 Corinthians 15:20), and in so doing brought the blessing of the Resurrection to every one of us.

Contemplating this wondrous thing, Paul declared: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (1 Corinthians 15:55).

### Jesus as a young boy

Two weeks ago I was in Jerusalem, that great and ancient city where Jesus walked 2,000 years ago. Standing on a high point, I looked down upon the Old City. I thought of Bethlehem, a few miles to the south, where He was born in a lowly manger. He who was the Son of God, the Only Begotten Son, left His Father's

celestial courts to take on mortality. At His birth angels sang and wise men came to bestow gifts. He grew as did other boys in Nazareth of Galilee. There He "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man" (Luke 2:52).

With Mary and Joseph He visited Jerusalem when He was 12. On their journey home, they missed Him. They came back to Jerusalem and found Him in the temple conversing with the learned doctors. When Mary upbraided Him for not being with them, He answered, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luke 2:49). His words were a premonition of His future ministry.

### **Jesus' early ministry**

That ministry began with His baptism in the river Jordan at the hands of His cousin John. When He arose from the water, the Holy Ghost descended upon Him in the form of a dove, and His Father's voice was heard, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). That declaration became the affirmation of His divinity.

He fasted for 40 days and was tempted of the devil, who sought to take Him from His divinely appointed mission. To the adversary's invitation He responded, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God" (Matthew 4:7), again declaring His divine sonship.

### **Jesus' teachings**

He walked the dusty roads of Palestine. He had no home that He could call His own, no place to rest His head. His message was the gospel of peace; His teachings were those of generosity and love: "If any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy [cloak] also" (Matthew 5:40).

He taught with parables. He performed miracles the like of which were

never performed before or since. He healed those whose sickness was of long standing. He caused the blind to see, the deaf to hear, the lame to walk. He raised the dead, and they lived again to speak His praises. Surely no man had ever done such before.

A few followed Him, but most hated Him. He spoke of the scribes and Pharisees as hypocrites, as whited sepulchres. They plotted against Him. He drove the money changers from the house of the Lord. They doubtless joined those who planned to destroy Him. But He was not deterred. He "went about doing good" (Acts 10:38).

Was not all of this enough to make His memory immortal? Was it not enough to place His name among and even above those of the great men who have walked the earth and who have been remembered for what they said or did? Certainly He would have been ranked among the great prophets of all time.

But all of this was not enough for the Son of the Almighty. It was but prelude to greater things to come. They came in a strange and terrible way.

### **Betrayal and crucifixion**

He was betrayed, arrested, condemned to death, to die in awful agony by crucifixion. His living body was nailed to a cross of wood. In unspeakable pain His life slowly ebbed away. While yet He breathed, He cried out, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

The earth shook as His spirit passed. The centurion who had seen it all declared in solemnity, "Truly this was the Son of God" (Matthew 27:54).

### **Events of the Resurrection**

Those who loved Him took His body from the cross. They dressed it and placed

it in a new tomb offered by Joseph of Arimathea. The tomb was sealed with a great stone at its opening, and a guard was set.

His friends must have wept. The Apostles He loved and whom He had called as witnesses of His divinity wept. The women who loved Him wept. None had understood what He had said about rising the third day. How could they understand? This had never happened before. It was totally unprecedented. It was unbelievable, even for them.

There must have been a terrible sense of dejection and hopelessness and misery as they thought of their Lord, taken from them in death.

But that was not the end. On the morning of the third day, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary returned to the tomb. To their utter amazement, the stone was rolled away and the tomb was open. They peered inside. Two beings in white sat at either end of the burial site. An angel appeared to them and said:

"Why seek ye the living among the dead?"

"He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee,

"Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again" (Luke 24:5-7).

These simple words—"He is not here, but is risen"—have become the most profound in all literature. They are the declaration of the empty tomb. They are the fulfillment of all He had spoken concerning rising again. They are the triumphant response to the query facing every man, woman, and child who was ever born to earth.

### **Appearances following the Resurrection**

The risen Lord spoke to Mary, and she replied. He was not an apparition. This was not imagination. He was real,

as real as He had been in mortal life. He did not permit her to touch Him. He had not yet ascended to His Father in Heaven. That would happen shortly. What a reunion it must have been, to be embraced by the Father, who loved Him and who also must have wept for Him during His hours of agony.

He would appear to two men on the road to Emmaus. He would converse with them and eat with them. He would meet with His Apostles behind closed doors and teach them. Thomas was not present on the first occasion. On the second occasion the Lord invited him to feel of His hands and His side. In utter wonder he exclaimed, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28). He spoke with 500 at one time.

### **Millions have believed in Christ**

Who can dispute the documentation of these facts? There is no record of any repudiation of the testimony of those who had these experiences. There is abundant evidence that they bore witness of these events throughout their lives, even giving their own lives in affirmation of the reality of the things they had experienced. Their word is clear, and their testimony is secure.

Men and women by the millions through the centuries have accepted that testimony. Countless numbers have lived and died in affirmation of its truth, which has come to them by the power of the Holy Ghost and which they could not in truth deny. Surely no event of human history has been tested more widely as to its validity.

### **Book of Mormon is a witness**

And there is another witness. This biblical companion, the Book of Mormon, testifies that He appeared not only to those of the Old World but also to those of the New. For had He not at one time declared, "Other sheep I have, which are



not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd"? (John 10:16).

To those of this hemisphere He appeared following His Resurrection. At His descent through the clouds of heaven, the voice of God the Eternal Father was heard again in solemn declaration: "Behold my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name—hear ye him" (3 Nephi 11:7).

Here again He called Twelve Apostles who would become witnesses of His name and divinity. He taught the people and blessed and healed them as He had done in Palestine, and peace reigned in the land for 200 years as the people sought to live by that which He had taught them.

### Joseph Smith's witness of God

And if all of this is not enough, there is the testimony, sure and certain and unequivocal, of the great prophet of this dispensation, Joseph Smith. As a boy he went into the woods to pray seeking light and understanding. And there appeared before him two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above him in the air. One of them spoke to him, calling him "by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*" (Joseph Smith—History 1:17).

This same Joseph declared on a subsequent occasion:

"We beheld the glory of the Son, on the right hand of the Father, and received of his fulness. . . .

"And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives!" (D&C 76:20, 22).

### Testimony of Jesus Christ

And so on this wonderful Easter morning, as the servants of the Almighty, as prophets and apostles in His great cause, we lift our voices in witness and testimony of our immortal Savior. He came to earth as the Son of the Everlasting Father. He did as Isaiah prophesied He must do. He bore "our griefs, and carried our sorrows. . . .

". . . He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:4-5).

In everlasting immortality He arose the third day from the rock-hewn grave. He spoke with many. His Father repeatedly affirmed His divine sonship.

Thanks be to the Almighty. His glorified Son broke the bonds of death, the greatest of all victories. As Paul declared, "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22).

He is our triumphant Lord. He is our Redeemer, who atoned for our sins. Through His redeeming sacrifice all men shall rise from the grave. He has opened the way whereby we may gain not only immortality but also eternal life.

As an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, I bear witness and testimony of these things this Easter day. I speak in solemnity and reverence and gratitude, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "Where Can I Turn for Peace?"

Elder Wayne M. Hancock offered the benediction.

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## SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 169th Annual General Conference commenced at 2:00 P.M. on Sunday, April 4, 1999. This session was conducted by President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Craig Jessop conducting and Richard Elliott at the organ.

President Monson made the following remarks as the meeting began.

### **President Thomas S. Monson**

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 169th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission.

Music for this session will be provided by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop, with Richard Elliott at the organ.

The choir will now sing "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder J. Kent Jolley of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty."

Elder J. Kent Jolley offered the invocation.

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### **President Monson**

The choir will now sing "Love One Another." Following the singing, Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will address us.

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The choir sang "Love One Another."

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## Elder Henry B. Eyring

### **Preaching the gospel is a powerful force**

There has been a war between light and darkness, between good and evil, since before the world was created. The battle still rages, and the casualties seem to be increasing. All of us have family members we love who are being buffeted by the forces of the destroyer, who would make all God's children miserable. For many of us there have been sleepless nights. We have tried to add every force for good we can to the powers swirling around the people who are at risk. We have loved them. We have set the best example we could. We have pled in prayer

for them. A wise prophet long ago gave us counsel about another force which we may at times underestimate and thus use too little.

Alma was the leader of a people faced with destruction by ferocious enemies. In the face of that danger, he could not do everything, so he had to choose. He could have built fortifications or created armaments or trained armies. But his only hope of victory was to get God's help, and for that he knew the people must repent. And so he chose to try one thing first:

"And now, as the preaching of the word had a great tendency to lead the

people to do that which was just—yea, it had . . . more powerful effect upon the minds of the people than the sword, or anything else, which had happened unto them—therefore Alma thought it was expedient that they should try the virtue of the word of God” (Alma 31:5).

### **The gospel opens eyes, hearts**

The word of God is the doctrine taught by Jesus Christ and by His prophets. Alma knew that words of doctrine had great power. They can open the minds of people to see spiritual things not visible to the natural eye. And they can open the heart to feelings of the love of God and a love for truth. The Savior drew on both those sources of power, to open our eyes and open hearts, in the 18th section of the Doctrine and Covenants as He taught His doctrine to those whom He wants to serve Him as missionaries. As you listen, think of that young man in your family now wavering in preparing himself for a mission. Here is how the Master taught two of His servants and how you might teach His doctrine to the young man you love:

“And now, Oliver Cowdery, I speak unto you, and also unto David Whitmer, by the way of commandment; for, behold, I command all men everywhere to repent, and I speak unto you, even as unto Paul mine apostle, for you are called even with that same calling with which he was called.

“Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God” (D&C 18:9–10).

He began by saying how much He trusts them. Then He draws their hearts to Him by saying how much His Father and He love every soul. He next goes to the foundation of His doctrine. He describes how much we have cause to love Him:

“For, behold, the Lord your Redeemer suffered death in the flesh; wherefore he suffered the pain of all

men, that all men might repent and come unto him.

“And he hath risen again from the dead, that he might bring all men unto him, on conditions of repentance.

“And how great is his joy in the soul that repenteth!” (D&C 18:11–13).

Having given the doctrine of His mission to open their hearts, He gives them His command: “Wherefore, you are called to cry repentance unto this people” (D&C 18:14).

Finally, He opens their eyes to see beyond the veil. He takes them and us to a future existence, described in the great plan of salvation, where we may yet be. He tells us of wonderful associations, worth giving our all to enjoy:

“And if it so be that you should labor all your days in crying repentance unto this people, and bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father!

“And now, if your joy will be great with one soul that you have brought unto me into the kingdom of my Father, how great will be your joy if you should bring many souls unto me!” (D&C 18:15–16).

In those few passages, He teaches doctrine to open our hearts to His love. And He teaches doctrine to open our eyes to see spiritual realities, invisible to any mind not illuminated by the Spirit of Truth.

### **Prepare to teach by the Spirit**

The need to open eyes and hearts tells us how we must teach doctrine. Doctrine gains its power as the Holy Ghost confirms that it is true. We prepare those we teach, as best we can, to receive the quiet promptings of the still, small voice. That takes at least some faith in Jesus Christ. It takes at least some humility, some willingness to surrender to the Savior’s will for us. The person you would help may have little of either, but you can urge that they desire to believe.

More than that, you can take confidence from another of the powers of doctrine. Truth can prepare its own way. Simply hearing the words of doctrine can plant the seed of faith in the heart. And even a tiny seed of faith in Jesus Christ invites the Spirit.

We have more control over our own preparation. We feast on the word of God in the scriptures and study the words of the living prophets. We fast and pray to invite the Spirit for ourselves and the person we would teach.

### **Teach simple, basic doctrine**

Because we need the Holy Ghost, we must be cautious and careful not to go beyond teaching true doctrine. The Holy Ghost is the Spirit of Truth. His confirmation is invited by our avoiding speculation or personal interpretation. That can be hard to do. You love the person you are trying to influence. He or she may have ignored the doctrine they have been taught. It is tempting to try something new or sensational. But we invite the Holy Ghost as our companion when we are careful to teach only true doctrine.

One of the surest ways to avoid even getting near false doctrine is to choose to be simple in our teaching. Safety is gained by that simplicity, and little is lost. We know that because the Savior has told us to teach the most important doctrine to little children. Listen to His command:

"And again, inasmuch as parents have children in Zion, or in any of her stakes which are organized, that teach them not to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, when eight years old, the sin be upon the heads of the parents" (D&C 68:25).

We can teach even a child to understand the doctrine of Jesus Christ. It is

therefore possible, with God's help, to teach the saving doctrine simply.

### **Teach children the doctrine**

We have the greatest opportunity with the young. The best time to teach is early, while children are still immune to the temptations of their mortal enemy, and long before the words of truth may be harder for them to hear in the noise of their personal struggles.

A wise parent would never miss a chance to gather children together to learn of the doctrine of Jesus Christ. Such moments are so rare in comparison with the efforts of the enemy. For every hour the power of doctrine is introduced into a child's life, there may be hundreds of hours of messages and images denying or ignoring the saving truths.

The question should not be whether we are too tired to prepare to teach doctrine or whether it wouldn't be better to draw a child closer by just having fun or whether the child isn't beginning to think that we preach too much. The question must be, "With so little time and so few opportunities, what words of doctrine from me will fortify them against the attacks on their faith which are sure to come?" The words you speak today may be the ones they remember. And today will soon be gone.

### **Your teaching will be remembered**

The years pass, we teach the doctrine the best we can, and yet some still do not respond. There is sorrow in that. But there is hope in the scriptural record of families. Think of Alma the Younger and Enos. In their moments of crisis, they remembered the words of their fathers, words of the doctrine of Jesus Christ. It saved them. Your teaching of that sacred doctrine will be remembered.

Two doubts may creep into your mind. You may wonder if you know the

doctrine well enough to teach it. And if you have already tried to teach it, you may wonder why you can't see much of the good effects.

### **A young woman preaches the gospel**

In my own family there is a story of a young woman who had the courage to start to teach doctrine when she was only a new convert with little education. And the fact that the effects of her teaching haven't ended gives me patience to wait for the fruits of my own efforts.

Mary Bommeli was my great-grandmother. I never met her. Her granddaughter heard her tell her story and wrote it down.

Mary was born in 1830. The missionaries taught her family in Switzerland when she was 24. She was still living at home, weaving and selling cloth to help support her family on their small farm. When the family heard the doctrine of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, they knew it was true. They were baptized. Mary's brothers were called on missions, going without purse or scrip. The rest of the family sold their possessions to go to America to gather with the Saints.

There was not enough money for all to go. Mary volunteered to stay behind because she felt she could earn enough from her weaving to support herself and save for her passage. She found her way to Berlin and to the home of a woman who hired her to weave cloth for the family's clothing. She lived in a servant's room and set up her loom in the living area of the home.

It was against the law then to teach the doctrine of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Berlin. But Mary could not keep the good news to herself. The woman of the house and her friends would gather around the loom to hear the Swiss girl teach. She talked about the appearance of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ to Joseph Smith, of the visi-

tation of angels, and of the Book of Mormon. When she came to the accounts of Alma, she taught the doctrine of the Resurrection.

That caused some problems with her weaving. In those days many children died very young. The women around the loom had lost children in death, some of them several children. When Mary taught the truth that little children were heirs of the celestial kingdom and that those women might again be with them and with the Savior and our Heavenly Father, tears rolled down the faces of the women. Mary cried too. All those tears falling got the cloth wet that Mary had woven.

Mary's teaching created a more serious problem. Even though Mary begged the women not to talk about what she told them, they did. They shared the joyous doctrine with their friends. So one night there was a knock at the door. It was the police. They took Mary off to jail. On the way she asked the policeman for the name of the judge she was to appear before the next morning. She asked if he had a family. She asked if he was a good father and a good husband. The policeman smiled as he described the judge as a man of the world.

At the jail Mary asked for a pencil and some paper. She wrote a letter to the judge. She wrote about the Resurrection of Jesus Christ as described in the Book of Mormon, about the spirit world, and about how long the judge would have to think and to consider his life before facing the final judgment. She wrote that she knew he had much to repent of which would break his family's heart and bring him great sorrow. She wrote through the night. In the morning she asked the policeman to take her letter to the judge. He did.

Later, the policeman was summoned by the judge to his office. The letter Mary had written was irrefutable evidence that she was teaching the gospel and so breaking the law. Nevertheless, it wasn't long until the policeman came back to

Mary's cell. He told her that all charges were dismissed and that she was free to go, on the conditions she had stated in her letter. Her teaching the doctrine of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ had opened eyes and hearts enough to get her cast into jail. And her declaring the doctrine of repentance to the judge got her cast out of jail. (See Theresa Snow Hill, *Life and Times of Henry Eyring and Mary Bommeli* [1997], 15–22.)

### **Gospel teaching influences generations**

The teaching of Mary Bommeli touched more than those women around the loom and the judge. My father, her grandson, talked to me during the nights as he approached death. He spoke of joyous reunions that were coming soon in the spirit world. I could almost see the bright sunlight and the smiles in that place of paradise as he talked about it with such assurance.

At one point I asked him if he had some repenting to do. He smiled. He chuckled softly as he said, "No, Hal, I've been repenting as I went along." The doctrine of paradise that Mary Bommeli taught those women was real to her grandson. And even the doctrine Mary taught the judge had shaped my father's life for good. That will not be the end of Mary Bommeli's teaching. The record of her words will send true doctrine to generations of her family yet unborn. Because she believed that even a new convert knew enough doctrine to teach it, the minds and

hearts of her descendants will be opened, and they will be strengthened in the battle.

Your descendants will teach doctrine to each other because you taught it. Doctrine can more than open minds to spiritual things and hearts to the love of God. When that doctrine brings joy and peace, it also has the power to open mouths. Like those women in Berlin, your descendants will not be able to keep the good news to themselves.

I am grateful to live in a time when we and our families have the fullness of the gospel restored. I am grateful for the Savior's mission of love for us and for the words of life which He has given us. I pray that we may share those words with those we love. I testify that God our Father lives and loves all His children. Jesus Christ is His Only Begotten Son in the flesh and our Savior. He is risen. We can be washed clean through obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The keys of the priesthood are restored. President Gordon B. Hinckley holds those keys. I know that is true. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Monson**

Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us.

We shall now hear from Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Bishop Keith B. McMullin, Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric.

## **Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin**

### **The Savior's love and compassion**

My beloved brothers and sisters, what a wonderful Easter day this has been. As we reflect on the life of the Savior and His Resurrection, certainly the many im-

ages of those who petitioned Him for help come to my mind. I can easily imagine the deformed legs of a man unable to walk since birth or the tears flowing down a widow's cheek as she follows the body of her only son as it is carried to its tomb.

I see the empty eyes of the hungry, the trembling hands of the sick, the pleading voice of the condemned, the disconsolate eye of the outcast. All of them are reaching toward a solitary man, a man without wealth, without home, without position.

I see this man, the Son of the living God, look on each of them with infinite compassion. With a touch of His holy hand, He brings comfort to the downcast, healing to the sick, liberation to the condemned. With a word the dead man rises from his bier and the widow embraces her enlivened son.

These and other miraculous acts of mercy and kindness, some widely known, others quiet and gentle, define for me one of the salient characteristics of the Savior: His love and compassion for the down-trodden, the weary, the weak, the suffering. Indeed, these acts of compassion are synonymous with His name.

Although nearly 2,000 years have passed since the mortal ministry of the Son of God, His loving example and His teachings remain an integral part of who we are as a people and who we are as a church. Today, through its inspired welfare program, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and its members strive to emulate His example as we seek to relieve suffering and foster self-reliance.

### **Scope of Church welfare**

The welfare program of the Church is well known throughout the world. People from all walks of life travel to Church headquarters to see firsthand how the Church cares for the poor and needy without creating dependency on the part of those who receive or bitterness on the part of those who give. A president of a country, after visiting Welfare Square, canceled the remainder of his appointments for the day. "There is something here that is more important than anything else I have on my schedule," he said. "I must stay and learn more."

Over the years the Church welfare program has grown to meet the ever-increasing needs of an expanding Church. In North America today 80 Church farms produce nutritious food for the needy. Eighty cannery facilities preserve and package this life-sustaining food. More than 100 bishops' storehouses stand ready to assist more than 10,000 bishops and branch presidents as they carry out their sacred obligation to seek out and assist the poor and needy in their wards and branches. Fifty Deseret Industries operations offer work and training to thousands. Worldwide, 160 employment centers help more than 78,000 people find jobs each year. Sixty-five LDS Social Services offices help member couples adopt children and provide counseling to those in need.

I feel certain that the great leaders whom the Lord raised up to pioneer this modern-day welfare effort would be well pleased with the advancement of this inspired program of today.

### **The Lord's way**

"It has always been a cardinal teaching with the Latter-day Saints," President Joseph F. Smith wrote, "that a religion which has not the power to save people temporally and make them prosperous and happy here, cannot be depended upon to save them spiritually, to exalt them in the life to come."<sup>1</sup>

The temporal and the spiritual are linked inseparably. As we give of our time, talents, and resources to tend the needs of the sick, offer food to the hungry, and teach the dependent to stand on their own, we enrich ourselves spiritually beyond our ability to comprehend.

The Lord declared in a revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith: "It is my purpose to provide for my saints. . . . But it must needs be done in mine own way; and behold this is the way that I, the Lord, have decreed to provide for my saints, that the poor shall be exalted, in

that the rich are made low."<sup>2</sup> The Lord's way consists of helping people help themselves. The poor are exalted because they work for the temporary assistance they receive, they are taught correct principles, and they are able to lift themselves from poverty to self-reliance. The rich are made low because they humble themselves to give generously of their means to those in need.

We teach members to be self-reliant, to do everything possible to sustain themselves, and to seek help from their families for needed assistance. When members and their families are doing all they can to provide necessities but still cannot meet basic needs, the Church stands ready to help.

In the Church the bishop has the specific charge to care for "the poor, the needy, the single parent, the aged, the disabled, the fatherless, the widowed, and others who have special needs."<sup>3</sup>

### **A ward helps a man in need**

I am aware of how one bishop marshaled his resources to assist a man who came to him for help. The man had been happily married for years, but because of a later addiction to alcohol and drugs he was left without a job, home, or family. Hard years of living on the street had degraded and humiliated him. With tears streaming down his face, he pleaded with his bishop for help.

The ward welfare committee discussed this challenge. One man knew a dentist who might be willing to replace the man's broken front teeth. The Relief Society president suggested that nutritious food from the bishops' storehouse might improve his health. Another suggested that this man needed someone who could spend time with him daily and help him find the strength to overcome his addictions.

As the suggestions streamed in, the bishop realized that an entire ward of concerned brothers and sisters stood ready to help.

Soon the bishop began to notice improvements. Priesthood brethren gave the man a blessing. A charitable dentist replaced his broken teeth. Food from the bishops' storehouse improved his health. A faithful elderly couple agreed to serve as special home teachers. They were with him daily to help him stick to his resolve.

Following established principles, this good brother offered to help others in the ward. Slowly his life began to improve. Gradually the look of desperation and misery gave way to one of joy and happiness. Although it was a painful process, he was able to free himself from his addictions. He became an active member in the Church. A life of destitution and misery turned into one of hope and happiness. This is the Lord's way of caring for those in need.

### **The Church and humanitarian relief**

The Church does not limit its relief efforts to its members but follows the admonition of the Prophet Joseph Smith when he said, "A man filled with the love of God, is not content with blessing his family alone, but ranges through the whole world, anxious to bless the whole human race."<sup>4</sup> He instructed members "to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to provide for the widow, to dry up the tear of the orphan, to comfort the afflicted."<sup>5</sup>

In a little over a decade, the Church has shipped more than 27,000 tons of clothing, 16,000 tons of food, and 3,000 tons of medical and educational supplies and equipment to relieve the suffering of millions of God's children in 146 countries in many parts of the world. We do not ask, "Are you members of our church?" We ask only, "Do you suffer?"

### **Humanitarian relief after a hurricane**

We are all aware of Hurricane Mitch, which devastated Nicaragua and Honduras last October and November. With



terrific force it flooded homes and caused mud slides. More than 10,000 people died and another 2 million were left homeless. This very strong hurricane destroyed homes and covered streets with mud that seemed as hard as cement.

Almost immediately the Church began sending life-sustaining food, clothing, medicine, and blankets to help both members of the Church and those of other faiths. Once the shipments arrived at their destination, Church members came by the hundreds to unload the trucks and assemble the supplies into boxes. The items in each box would sustain a family for a week.

Our dear President Gordon B. Hinckley, who is the chairman of the General Welfare Committee, felt troubled by the suffering in Central America. One sleepless night he felt a prompting to go and offer his love and support to those who had endured this great loss. The prophet's visit lifted the spirits and gave hope to thousands. "As long as [the Church] has any resources," he told them, "we will stand by you in times of trouble."<sup>6</sup> And I testify to you, brothers and sisters, that he truly is a prophet of God. And I sustain him with all my heart.

### **Examples of Church members serving**

In addition to providing needed supplies in times of disaster and catastrophe, nearly 1,300 members of the Church have accepted calls from the Lord to serve the needy of many nations. Let me give two examples.

Brother David and Sister Dovie Glines, from Ivins, Utah, currently live in Ghana, Africa, where they teach business, computer, and office management skills to those who are seeking to improve their employment.

Brother Mark Cutler is a retired surgeon from Clayton, California. He and his wife, Bonnie, serve in Vietnam. Brother Cutler is a consultant and instructor for local physicians. Sister Cutler teaches

English and medical terminology to the hospital doctors and staff.

### **Welfare and the member**

In addition to helping others, families and individual members would do well to review their own level of self-reliance. We may ask ourselves a few questions:

Are we wise stewards of our money? Do we spend less than we earn? Do we avoid unnecessary debt? Do we follow the counsel of the Brethren to "store sufficient food, clothing, and where possible fuel for at least one year"?<sup>7</sup> Do we teach our children to value and not waste what they have? Do we teach them to work? Do they understand the importance of the sacred law of tithing? Do we have sufficient education and adequate employment? Do we maintain good health by living the Word of Wisdom? Are we free from the adverse effects of harmful substances?

If in honesty we answer "no" to any of these questions, we may wish to improve our self-reliance plan. Prophets have provided fundamental guides for us.

First, one of today's evils is the sin of covetousness. Inordinate desire for material possessions can become an obsession that consumes our thoughts, drains our resources, and leads to unhappiness. Some members of the Church are increasingly burdened with unnecessary debt because of this sin. President Heber J. Grant said: "If there is any one thing that will bring peace and contentment into the human heart, and into the family, it is to live within our means. And if there is any one thing that is grinding and discouraging and disheartening, it is to have debts and obligations that one cannot meet."<sup>8</sup>

"Industry, thrift, self-reliance continue as guiding principles of this effort," President Thomas S. Monson, chairman of the Welfare Executive Committee of the Church, has admonished. "As a people, we should avoid unreasonable debt. . . .

'Pay thy debt, and live.' (2 Kings 4:7.) What wise counsel for us today!"

Second, from the beginning God has commanded us to work<sup>10</sup> and has warned us against idleness.<sup>11</sup> Sadly, many in our world today encourage idleness, especially in the form of mindless, inane entertainment that is on the Internet, on television, and in computer games.

Third, I commend to you the counsel of President Hinckley when he said: "Get all the education you can. . . . Cultivate skills of mind and hands. Education is the key to opportunity."<sup>12</sup> Yes, education is the catalyst that will hone and sharpen our talents, skills, and abilities and cause them to blossom.

Fourth, those who choose to follow the example of the Savior and relieve suffering could look to the amount they contribute to fast offerings. These sacred funds are used for one purpose and one purpose only: to bless the sick, the suffering, and others in need.

Contributing a generous fast offering blesses the givers richly and allows them to become partners with the Lord and the bishop in helping relieve suffering and fostering self-reliance. In our prosperous circumstances, perhaps we should evaluate our offerings and decide if we are as generous with the Lord as He is with us.

### Follow the Savior's example of giving

If the Savior were among us in mortality today, He would be found ministering to the needy, the suffering, the sick. Following this example may be one of the reasons President Spencer W. Kimball said: "When viewed in this light, we can see that [welfare] is not a program, but the essence of the gospel. *It is the gospel in action.* It is the crowning principle of a Christian life."<sup>13</sup>

When the welfare program emerged from its humble beginnings in the midst of the Great Depression, few imagined that 60 years later it would have blossomed

and flourished to the point where it blesses literally millions of the world's needy.

The beautiful hymn "Because I Have Been Given Much" touches on an inspired lesson in giving.

Because I have been sheltered, fed by  
thy good care,  
I cannot see another's lack and I not  
share  
My glowing fire, my loaf of bread,  
My roof's safe shelter overhead,  
That he too may be comforted.<sup>14</sup>

Brothers and sisters, the Savior, who set the pattern for us, is pleased with those who "remember in all things the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted."<sup>15</sup> He is pleased with those who hearken to His admonition to "succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees."<sup>16</sup>

May we follow His example is my prayer. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. "The Truth about Mormonism," *Out West*, Sept. 1905, 242.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 104:15–16.
3. *Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 1: Stake Presidencies and Bishops* (1998), 14.
4. *History of the Church*, 4:227.
5. *Times and Seasons*, 15 Mar. 1842, 732.
6. Address given in Honduras, 21 Nov. 1998; see also "President Hinckley: 'We Will Not Forget You,'" *Church News*, 28 Nov. 1998, 3, 6–7.
7. First Presidency letter, 24 June 1988.
8. *Gospel Standards*, comp. G. Homer Durham (1941), 111.
9. In Conference Report, Oct. 1988, 57; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, 46.
10. See Genesis 3:19.
11. See Doctrine and Covenants 88:124.
12. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 172.
13. In Conference Report, Oct. 1977, 123–24; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1977, 77.
14. *Hymns*, no. 219.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 52:40.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 81:5.

## Bishop Keith B. McMullin

### Life is a homeward journey

My dear brothers and sisters, as this general conference draws to a close, my thoughts turn to those who feel lonely, afraid, or who have lost their way. If you or someone you know is "out there . . . in the shadows" (Gordon B. Hinckley, in Conference Report, Apr. 1997, 68; or *Ensign*, May 1997, 48), please listen!

Mortal life is like unto the traveler on a homeward journey. The miles seem long, the minutes slow, the events of the day protracted and tedious. Eventually, however, familiar scenes come into view. They may be hills or valleys, country landscapes or towering buildings, a teeming thoroughfare or a quiet neighborhood street. Whatever the scene, its familiarity quickens the traveler's step, invigorates his wearied soul, and restores sweet feelings of anticipation and peace. At long last he is home again.

### Select the path carefully

In our mobile, bustling world, this experience of the homeward journey is repeated daily in the lives of millions of people. If we look closely, we can learn much about mortality from such a common occurrence. One thing is certain—we make a colossal mistake if we approach this mortal journey frivolously or take whatever path presents itself without thought as to where it leads. As one beloved Apostle has observed: "Truly, of all the errors mortals could make, God's plan of salvation is the wrong thing to be wrong about! No error could be more enormous or more everlasting in its consequences!" (Neal A. Maxwell, in Conference Report, Apr. 1984, 30; or *Ensign*, May 1984, 22).

The successful traveler understands and acts correctly on four things, namely:

the eternity of life, the nature of sin, the beauty of repentance, and the power of the Atonement.

### Life is eternal

Life is more than biology. Before we came to this earth, we lived in the presence of God. His heaven was our home. Each of us is His spirit offspring, and He is our Heavenly Father (see Abraham 3:23–25; Job 38:4–7; Jeremiah 1:5). Because of the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ, we know that birth is divinely appointed and an essential step in our eternal journey. In the words of the Lord's prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley: "*The fact of all life is that it is eternal.* That's the great salient truth. We have come into the world for a purpose under a divine plan and when we conclude this life we will go on to something that will be better, if we live worthy of it" (priesthood leadership session, Charlotte North Carolina regional conference, 24 Feb. 1996, 5; italics added).

### The nature of sin

The nature of sin, however, makes this mortal journey anything but an easy task. Wrote the Apostle Paul:

*"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.*

"For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

"Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,

"Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;

"Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: *from such turn away*" (2 Timothy 3:1–5; italics added).

Because of our frailties and vulnerabilities, sin becomes a part of every traveler's journey. It is the consequence of being in the crucible of law, opposition, and agency (see Alma 12:31–34; 42:17–24; 2 Nephi 2:11, 15–16, 25–27). “To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (James 4:17).

Furthermore, no matter how well-intentioned or watchful we are, the journey causes us to suffer temptation. Not even the Savior escaped it, and the temptations He suffered at the outset of His ministry typify those that beset us. Speaking of these temptations—to turn stones into bread, to cast Himself from the temple's pinnacle, and to sell His soul for earth's treasures (see Matthew 4:2–10)—Elder David O. McKay said, “Classify them, and you will find that under one of those three nearly every given temptation that makes you and me spotted . . . comes to us as (1) a temptation of appetite; (2) a yielding to the pride and fashion and vanity of those alienated from the things of God; or (3) a gratifying of the . . . desire for the riches of the world, or power among men” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1911, 59).

### **The gift of conscience and repentance**

When temptation besets us, we experience pain of conscience. A sensitive conscience is the evidence of a healthy spirit. The pain or guilt we feel is the spirit's reaction to temptation, imperfection, or sin. Conscience is the companion of every traveler (see Moroni 7:16–19); it can also make the trip very uncomfortable, since “all have sinned” and “the Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance” (Romans 3:23; D&C 1:31). Thanks be to God for this supernal gift, for it can lead us to repentance and peace of conscience (see Mosiah 4:1–3).

Heavenly Father knew the grave dangers we would face on our journey through life, but He remains resolute in His desire to have each and every one of

His children return home. Therefore, He gave us time—time to work out our mistakes, time to overcome our sins, time to prepare for reunion. “There was a space granted unto man in which he might repent; therefore this life became a probationary state; a time to prepare to meet God” (Alma 12:24).

### **Atonement makes our return possible**

But Heavenly Father knew that even if we exerted every ounce of energy, we could not make it home without divine help. Therefore, He promised, “We will provide a Savior for you!” (see 1 Nephi 10:4; 13:40; 2 Nephi 25:23; Moses 1:6).

In fulfillment of this promise, Jesus Christ came during the meridian of time, the Only Begotten Son of God, the Eternal Father, in the flesh. He walked the paths and byways of mortality so He could “know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities” (Alma 7:12; see also v. 11; Ether 12:27; D&C 20:22; 62:1). There is not one vexation, anxiety, or suffering unfamiliar to Him. Though He is without sin, yet knows He each and every one of our griefs that He might be able to help us (see Isaiah 53:3–6).

Christ bridged the gulf between the mortal and immortal. The grave no longer holds its captives; justice can be satisfied through mercy; the wondrous Atonement, infinite and eternal in scope, is in place (see Alma 34:8–10, 14–16). Christ is the resurrected Lord, our Savior and Redeemer. Therefore, do not wait any longer (see Alma 13:27; 34:33–35).

Have faith in Christ, trust Him, come unto Him, follow Him (see 3 Nephi 27:13–16; Moroni 10:32–33). Make a mental list of those things you know you ought not to be doing. Stop doing today at least one such thing, and replace it with what you ought to do. Pray to Heavenly Father for forgiveness and for the strength to complete this journey. As you overcome one obstacle and move on to

another, I promise that step by step the way will unfold before you until, as the wearied traveler, you are back where you belong.

### **A man finds his way back to the Church**

Thomas (that is not his real name) was one who had lost his way. We became acquainted at a special fireside attended by members one doesn't normally see on Sunday. He was then 35 years old and had not been active in the Church for some 20 years. The day before, Thomas's father had invited him to attend the fireside. Thomas said, "I'll think about it." I quote now from a letter written by his father:

"Thirty minutes before the fireside, [Thomas] called and asked me to pick him up. I can't explain the anticipation I felt as we walked into the room [to join] you and about 40 others. There was a special feeling and spirit there that touched [Tom's] heart and he went home determined to read again the passages in the Book of Mormon that you had outlined.

"This led to a reading of the whole book and the beginning of his payment of tithing. He began to see his life in a different light. . . . He stopped using drugs and caffeine. He continued to read, not only the Book of Mormon, but also the Doctrine and Covenants. He started to attend sacrament meetings and . . . literally began to be a different person. In fact, we jokingly asked him, 'What have you done with our son?'

"The great blessing to us was when he was interviewed by the bishop . . . to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood. This has truly been an answer to prayers which have been offered in his behalf for almost 20 years" (personal letter, 1 Aug. 1997).

This account recalls to our minds the words of another parent: "For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found" (Luke 15:24).

### **Prepare now to return to God's presence**

Said President Brigham Young: "There is no spirit but what was pure and holy when it came here from the celestial world. Our Father in heaven . . . is the Father of our spirits; and if we could know, understand, and do His will, every soul would be prepared to return back into His presence. And when they get there, they would see that they had formerly lived there for ages, that they had previously been acquainted with every nook and corner, with the palaces, walks, and gardens; and they would embrace their Father, and He would embrace them and say, 'My son, my daughter, I have you again;' and the child would say, 'O my Father, my Father, I am here again'" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 4:268).

With all the power of which I am capable, I bear witness to the truthfulness of these things. Come in out of the shadows! Step fully into the light of the gospel. Enjoy the sweet fruits of repentance, the peace of conscience, and the comfort of the Holy Ghost. Let this journey take you back where you belong. Recalling a familiar phrase, I leave with you this testimonial:

"O my Father, thou that dwellest  
In the high and glorious place,"  
I do yearn to once again be  
With Thee, and behold Thy face.  
Then shall I, in adoration,  
Bow before my Savior dear,  
Thank Him for His great Atonement,  
Wash His feet with many tears.  
And with grateful heart a-swelling,  
Seeing I am not alone,  
Will feel Thy love and hear Thy greet-  
ing—  
"Sons and daughters, welcome home!"  
[Adapted from Eliza R. Snow, "O My Father," *Hymns*, no. 292]

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## President Monson

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us, followed by Bishop Keith B. McMullin of the Presiding Bishopric.

The choir and congregation will now sing "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet." Following the singing, Elder

Cree-L Kofford of the Seventy will address us. He will be followed by Elder Dennis B. Neuenschwander, also of the Seventy.

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The choir and congregation sang "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."

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## Elder Cree-L Kofford

I wonder if you have any idea how easy you are to love and how much I love you. Just before this session started, some of our grandchildren stopped by our hotel room. They had obviously been talking about Elder Marlin Jensen's talk of this morning. One of them said, "Are you scared, Grandpa?" I lied and said, "Not very." Another one said, "Don't worry, Grandpa, if you mess up, we'll still love you." But then reality came back into the room when someone added, "But, Grandpa, it would be very embarrassing." So I am going to try very hard not to mess up.

### "Over this line you may not cross"

On June 26, 1858, what I believe to be the largest standing army in the history of the United States up to that date began its prearranged entry into Salt Lake Valley. They had come to quell a nonexistent rebellion. Almost anyone remotely familiar with the history of the Church can tell you that they marched in relative silence within a few yards of where this building now stands, through a city described by one writer as "deserted," and encamped some distance to the west. What followed is far less well known. In due course the army moved approximately 40 miles south of Salt Lake City to the village of Fairfield, a small farming community in Cedar Valley, home to what is estimated

to have been less than 200 people. Their local spiritual leader was John Carson, my great-grandfather.

Imagine how this small congregation must have felt. After all, how would you like to wake up some morning and find that several thousand soldiers, together with over 3,000 wagons, 10,000 oxen, and 12,000 mules, had moved into your ward? The challenges were immediate. From our oral family history, and subject to all of the romanticizing and inaccuracies of such histories, we learn that Bishop Carson was gravely concerned about the welfare of the people over whom he presided. All of the challenges that attended army encampments of that time descended upon Fairfield almost overnight.

To protect the members of the congregation as much as possible, Bishop Carson met with the commander of the fort, who often dined at his hotel and with whom he developed a good relationship based upon mutual respect. The two leaders surveyed the situation and then by agreement drew a line upon the ground. No army personnel would cross into the civilian community without specific approval of their superiors. And members of the congregation would not cross into the fort without specific approval from Bishop Carson. The line on the ground represented an unspoken command: "Over this line you may not cross."

When we were children, a line on the ground had special significance. Whenever boyhood tempers caused disagreement, the time-honored solution called for a line on the ground. The antagonists stood on opposite sides of the line, attempting to act as intimidating as possible. Someone would say, "Step over the line and you'll be sorry," though they usually didn't say it in those genteel words. In those moments I learned the great value of a line on the ground and the consequences of stepping over it. In the years that have followed, I have come to understand that figurative lines on the ground are placed there by a loving Heavenly Father who seeks to protect us from Lucifer's army.

#### **"Your name is safe in our home"**

While each of us may have dozens of lines on the ground in our life today, I would like to discuss just one of them—the line that says, "Keep each person's name safe in your home."

During the early years of my service as a General Authority, I was privileged to be in company with Elder Marion D. Hanks on one occasion when he related the following story. I use it here with his permission:

Oscar Kirkham was one of the great men of the Church and among the Church's most respected Scouters. He served in the First Council of the Seventy and was a significant presence wherever he went. Often in meetings he would rise to a "point of personal privilege" and then, when recognized, would proceed to say something good about someone. Near the end of his life, he spoke briefly at Brigham Young University on the theme "say the good word." On the morning that Elder Kirkham died, Elder Hanks was invited to the Kirkham family home. There he was handed a small, inexpensive notebook in which Elder Kirkham had kept his notes. The last two entries were: "Say

the good word" and "Your name is safe in our home" (see Marion D. Hanks, foreword to *Say the Good Word*, by Oscar A. Kirkham [1958], 4).

What a blessing it would be if all of us could follow that counsel, if each of our names truly could be safe in the home of others. Have you noticed how easy it is to cross over the line and find fault with other people? All too often we seek to be excused from the very behavior we condemn in others. Mercy for me, justice for everyone else is a much too common addiction. When we deal with the name and reputation of another, we deal with something sacred in the sight of the Lord.

#### **Do not speak evil about others**

There are those among us who would recoil in horror at the thought of stealing another person's money or property but who don't give a second thought to stealing another person's good name or reputation.

The old adage "Never judge another man until you have walked a mile in his footsteps" is as good advice today as it was the day it was first uttered. Someone once said:

There is so much good in the worst  
of us,  
And so much bad in the best of us,  
That it ill behooves any of us  
To find fault with the rest of us.  
[In Hazel Felleman, sel., *The Best  
Loved Poems of the American People*  
(1936), 615]

The principle is not new, nor is it unique to our day and time. The book of Psalms from the Old Testament contains this urgent warning from the Lord: "Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off" (Psalm 101:5).

James, a servant of the Lord in the meridian of time, repeated this eternal truth when he said:

"Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law. . . .

"... Who art thou that judgest another?" (James 4:11-12).

And in this latter day, the Lord renewed His long-taught command in a revelation given through the prophet Brigham Young: "Cease to speak evil one of another" (D&C 136:23).

It is most significant to me that this simple commandment is set forth just a few verses from the Lord's words on the penalty for disobedience: "Be diligent in keeping all my commandments, lest judgments come upon you, and your faith fail you, and your enemies triumph over you" (D&C 136:42).

### **Accountable for our words**

To those who doubt the importance of the commandment, may I pose two simple questions: (1) How can you say you love your fellowman when behind his back you seek to diminish his good name and reputation? (2) How can you say you love your God when you cannot even love your neighbor?

Any feeble attempt to justify such conduct only brings more forcibly to mind those explosive words of the Savior found in the book of Matthew:

"O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? . . .

"But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.

"For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matthew 12:34, 36-37).

### **Children can remind families to speak only good**

I would like to say a few words to the Primary children who may be listening.

Children, I've been trying to teach your moms and dads something very important, but I need your help. I'll make you a deal. If you will promise to listen very carefully, I promise not to talk very long.

Do you remember the story of Bambi, the little deer, and all of his friends in the forest? If you do you will remember that one of Bambi's good friends was a rabbit named Thumper. Thumper was about your age. He was a neat rabbit, but he had one problem. He kept saying bad things about people. One day Bambi was in the forest learning to walk, and he fell down. Thumper just couldn't resist the temptation. "He doesn't walk very good, does he?" Thumper blurted out. His mother felt very bad and said, "What did your father tell you this morning?" And then Thumper, looking down at his feet and kind of shifting his weight, said, "If you can't say somethin' nice, don't say nothin' at all." That's a good piece of advice that all of us need to follow.

What I need you to do, young people, is this. If you hear anyone in your family start to say something bad about someone else, will you please just stamp your foot and say in a loud voice, "If you can't say somethin' nice, don't say nothin' at all." Now, even though that isn't correct English, everyone will understand exactly what you mean. Now, Moms and Dads, that ought to make it a little easier to live the commandment.

I pray that the Lord will bless each of us that we may never cross over the line on the ground and that we may live so that it can be said, "Your name is safe in our home."

On this special Easter Day, I close with my solemn declaration, born of the Spirit, that Jesus Christ is indeed our Savior and our Redeemer and that salvation comes by and through His atoning sacrifice and in no other way. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.



## Elder Dennis B. Neuenschwander

### Building eternal keepsakes

Brethren and sisters, every family has keepsakes. Families collect furniture, books, porcelain, and other valuable things, then pass them on to their posterity. Such beautiful keepsakes remind us of loved ones now gone and turn our minds to loved ones unborn. They form a bridge between family past and family future.

Every family has other, more valuable keepsakes. These include genealogies, family stories, historical accounts, and traditions. These eternal keepsakes also form a bridge between past and future and bind generations together in ways that no other keepsake can.

I would like to share a few thoughts about family history, bridges, and eternal keepsakes. Family history builds bridges between the generations of our families, builds bridges to activity in the Church, and builds bridges to the temple.

### Family history bridges generations

First, family history builds bridges between the generations of our families. Bridges between generations are not built by accident. Each member of this Church has the personal responsibility to be an eternal architect of this bridge for his or her own family. At one of our family gatherings this past Christmas, I watched my father, who is 89 years old, and our oldest grandchild, Ashlin, who is four and a half. They enjoyed being together. This was a bittersweet moment of realization for me. Though Ashlin will retain pleasant but fleeting memories of my father, he will have no memory of my mother, who passed away before his birth. Not one of my children has any recollection of my grandparents. If I want my children and grandchildren to know those who still live in my memory, then I must build the bridge between

them. I alone am the link to the generations that stand on either side of me. It is my responsibility to knit their hearts together through love and respect, even though they may never have known each other personally. My grandchildren will have no knowledge of their family's history if I do nothing to preserve it for them. That which I do not in some way record will be lost at my death, and that which I do not pass on to my posterity, they will never have. The work of gathering and sharing eternal family keepsakes is a personal responsibility. It cannot be passed off or given to another.

A life that is not documented is a life that within a generation or two will largely be lost to memory. What a tragedy this can be in the history of a family. Knowledge of our ancestors shapes us and instills within us values that give direction and meaning to our lives. Some years ago I met the director of a Russian Orthodox monastery. He showed me volumes of his own extensive family research. He told me that one of the values, perhaps even the main value, of genealogy is the establishment of family tradition and the passing of these traditions on to younger generations. "Knowledge of these traditions and family history," he said, "welds generations together." Further, he told me: "If one knows he comes from honest ancestors, he is duty and honor bound to be honest. One cannot be dishonest without letting each member of his family down."<sup>1</sup>

### Start recording your history

If you are among the first to have embraced the gospel in your family, build bridges to your posterity by recording the events of your life and writing words of encouragement to them. In 1892 sisters of the Kolob Stake in Springville, Utah, wrote letters to their children and sealed them in a time capsule to be opened March 17, 1942, the centennial

anniversary of the Relief Society. After recording a brief genealogy of her family reaching back to those who first joined the Church, Mariah Catherine Boyer wrote the following to her two children: "Dear children, when you read this, parents and grandparents will be sleeping in the silent tomb. Those hands that toiled so hard in love for you will toil no more, and those eyes that gazed in love and approbation on your innocent brows will see you no more, until we meet in heaven. Dear children, . . . may the bands of a sister and a brother's love entwine your hearts. . . . Do right by your fellowmen, follow the dictates of your conscience, ask God to give you power to resist all temptations to do evil, and let it be said of you, 'that the world is better for you having lived in it.' Keep the commandments of God. May your paths in life be strewn with flowers, and may you at all times do right. May you never taste adversity. May the Spirit and blessings of God attend you at all times is the prayer of your mother. I will enclose the photographs of our family. Goodbye my dear children, until we meet."<sup>2</sup> These tender and beautiful words have now bridged six generations of a faithful family.

### **Importance of knowing your ancestors**

Family history and temple work have a great power, which lies in their scriptural and divine promise that the hearts of the fathers will turn to the children and those of the children will turn to their fathers.<sup>3</sup> Woodrow Wilson stated: "A nation which does not remember what it was yesterday, does not know what it is today, nor what it is trying to do. We are trying to do a futile thing if we do not know where we came from or what we have been about."<sup>4</sup> Well might this be said of families also: *A family* "which does not remember what it was yesterday, does not know what it is today, nor what it is trying to do. We are trying to do a futile thing if we do not know

where we came from or what we have been about."

### **Family history strengthens all members**

Second, family history builds bridges to activity in the Church. Family history work solidifies converts and strengthens all members of the Church. Family history research and the preparation of names for the temple can be most valuable in the retention of new members. Faith and confidence grow as family members are included in the saving ordinances of the gospel. During a recent stake conference, I met John and Carmen Day, who were recently baptized. They told me that they had already prepared family names and were planning to enter the temple as soon as they could. Is retention a question here? A new member of the Church can be introduced to family history and temple work very quickly by missionaries, friends, neighbors, and priesthood and auxiliary leaders. Participation in temple ordinances is, after all, at the center of our gospel experience. No official call is required to participate in family history and the accompanying gospel ordinances.

Recently I read an article in the *Improvement Era* of August 1940. I quote: "A year ago last April Conference, Dr. John A. Widtsoe of the Council of the Twelve asked the mission presidents of the Church what single phase of the Gospel was most responsible in their respective missions for making new friends, new interests, new converts. President Frank Evans of the Eastern States Mission looked into the subject and concluded that genealogy, and its attendant Gospel ordinances and beliefs, was the greatest factor in his mission."<sup>5</sup>

### **A major factor in activation, retention**

A more recent Church study reveals that early involvement in finding and preparing family names for the temple and, where possible, participating in vicar-

ious baptisms for them are major factors in the retention of new members. The First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve have encouraged a much broader use of family history and the Family History Centers™ in the retention of new converts and the activation of those who have fallen out of regular Church activity. Priesthood leaders, missionaries, and Family History Center directors all play important roles in the expanded use of these centers.

### Family history work ties to temple work

Third, family history builds bridges to the temple. Family history work leads us to the temple. Family history and temple work are one work. The words *family history* should probably never be said without attaching the word *temple* to them. Family history research should be the primary source of names for temple ordinances, and temple ordinances are the primary reason for family history research. President Gordon B. Hinckley has said: "All of our vast family history endeavor is directed to temple work. There is no other purpose for it."<sup>6</sup>

Family history research provides the emotional bridge between the generations. Temple ordinances provide the priesthood bridge. Temple ordinances are the priesthood ratification of the connection that we have already established in our hearts. Mother Teresa said that "loneliness and the feeling of being unwanted is the most terrible poverty."<sup>7</sup> The thought that this poverty of loneliness—this being unwanted and separated from loved ones—

could extend beyond this life is truly sad. The promise of family history and temple work is eternal connection born of both love and priesthood ordinances.

Brethren and sisters, family history and temple work are the eternal family keepsakes that build bridges. They build bridges between the generations of our families, bridges to activity in the Church, and bridges to the temple. It is my desire that each of us will recognize the great keepsakes we have received from those who preceded us and our own personal responsibility to pass them on to future generations. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Dennis B. Neuenschwander, personal journal, 14 Aug. 1975.
2. Mariah Catherine Boyer, letter to her two children, Irena B. Mendenhall and Richard Lovell Mendenhall Jr.
3. See Malachi 4:5–6.
4. Quoted in *The Rebirth of America* (1986), 12.
5. *Improvement Era*, Aug. 1940, 495.
6. In Conference Report, Apr. 1998, 115–16; or *Ensign*, May 1998, 88.
7. Quoted in *Church News*, 20 June 1998, 2.

### President Monson

Elder Cree-L Kofford of the Seventy has just spoken to us, followed by Elder Dennis B. Neuenschwander of the Seventy.

We shall now hear from Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

## Elder M. Russell Ballard

Brothers and sisters, this has been an inspirational two days, and I hope that my remarks will also add to the instruction and the spirit of this general conference.

### Joy of temple marriage

Occasionally I have the privilege of officiating in the temple when two worthy young people are married and sealed in

the house of the Lord. These are always special times for family and friends. The feeling at such times is a sweet and satisfying mix of earthly happiness and eternal joy seen in the tear-filled eyes of mothers who have prayed for this day with all of their hearts. You see it in the eyes of fathers who, for the first time in months, are thinking about something besides how to pay for all of the expenses. But mostly you see it in the eyes of a virtuous bride and groom who have lived true to the teachings of the gospel, shunning the temptations of the world. There is a special, undeniable feeling available to those who have remained clean and pure and chaste.

### **Morality standards are absolute**

Too many of our young men and women are succumbing to the pressures imposed by a world saturated with evil messages and immoral behavior. Lucifer is waging a vicious war for the souls of young and old alike, and the casualty count is climbing. The standards of the world have shifted like the sands of a windblown desert. That which was once unheard of or unacceptable is now commonplace. The world's perspective has been so dramatically altered that those who choose to adhere to traditional standards of morality are viewed as strange, almost as though they must justify their desire to keep the commandments of God.

But one thing is certain: the commandments have not changed. Let there be no mistake about that. Right is still right. Wrong is still wrong, no matter how cleverly cloaked in respectability or political correctness. We believe in chastity before marriage and fidelity ever after. That standard is an absolute standard of truth. It is neither subject to public opinion polls nor dependent upon situation or circumstance. There is no need to debate it or other gospel standards.

### **Building fortresses of faith in the home**

But there is a desperate need for parents, leaders, and teachers to help our youth learn to understand, love, value, and live the standards of the gospel. Parents and youth must stand together in defense against a clever and devious adversary. We must be just as dedicated, effective, and determined in our efforts to live the gospel as he is in his efforts to destroy it—and us.

The challenge before us is great. At risk are the immortal souls of those we love. May I suggest four ways we can build a fortress of faith in our homes and particularly help prepare our youth to be clean and chaste and pure, completely worthy to enter the temple.

### **Teach children the gospel**

The first is gospel information. The most important, life-changing information that I know of is the knowledge that we are truly children of God our Eternal Father. This is not only doctrinally correct, it is spiritually vital. Said the Savior in His powerful intercessory prayer, "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3). To know Heavenly Father and to understand our relationship to Him as our Father and our God is to find meaning in this life and hope in the life to come. Our families need to know He is real, that we are in fact His sons and His daughters and heirs to all that He has, now and forever. Secure in that knowledge, family members will be less likely to look for devilish diversions and more likely to look to God and live (see Numbers 21:8).

### **Live by covenant, not convenience**

Somehow we need to instill in our hearts the powerful testimony of the gospel

of Jesus Christ like unto that of our pioneer forefathers. Remember when Nauvoo fell in September of 1846 and the unbearable conditions of the Saints in the poor camps. When word reached Winter Quarters, Brigham Young immediately called the brethren together. After explaining the situation and reminding them of the covenant made in the Nauvoo Temple that no one who wanted to come, no matter how poor, would be left behind, he gave them this remarkable challenge:

"Now is the time for labor," he said. "*Let the fire of the covenant which you made in the House of the Lord, burn in your hearts, like flame unquenchable*" (To the High Council at Council Point, 27 Sept. 1846, Brigham Young Papers, Historical Department Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1; *italics added*). Within a few days, in spite of near-destitute conditions at Winter Quarters, many wagons were rolling eastward to rescue the Saints in the poor camps along the Mississippi River.

We often hear of the suffering and the sacrifice those early Saints endured, and we ask ourselves, How did they do it? What was it that gave them such strength? Part of the answer lies in President Young's powerful words. Those early Latter-day Saints had made covenants with God, and those covenants burned like unquenchable fire in their hearts.

Sometimes we are tempted to let our lives be governed more by convenience than by covenant. It is not always convenient to live gospel standards and stand up for truth and testify of the Restoration. It usually is not convenient to share the gospel with others. It isn't always convenient to respond to a calling in the Church, especially one that stretches our abilities. Opportunities to serve others in meaningful ways, as we have covenanted to do, rarely come at convenient times. But there is no spiritual power in living by convenience. The power comes as we keep our covenants. As we look at the lives of these

early Saints, we see that their covenants were the primary force in their lives. Their example and testimony were powerful enough to influence generation after generation of their children.

### Teach children about morality

As our children grow, they need information taught by parents more directly and plainly about what is and is not appropriate. Parents need to teach children to avoid any pornographic photographs or stories. Children and youth need to know from parents that pornography of any kind is a tool of the devil; and if anyone flirts with it, it has the power to addict, dull, and even destroy the human spirit. They need to be taught not to use vulgar language and never to use the Lord's name in vain. Crude jokes overheard should never be repeated. Teach family members not to listen to music that celebrates the sensual. Talk to them plainly about sex and the teaching of the gospel regarding chastity. Let this information come from parents in the home in an appropriate way. All family members need to know the rules and be fortified spiritually so they can keep them. And when mistakes are made, the wondrous Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ must be understood and accepted so that through the complete and sometimes difficult process of repentance, forgiveness and continued hope for the future can be obtained. We must never give up our individual and family quest for eternal life.

Unfortunately, far too many parents in today's world have abdicated the responsibility to teach these values and other Church doctrines to their families, believing that others will do it: the peer group, the school, Church leaders and teachers, or even the media. Every day our children are learning, filling their minds and hearts with experiences and perceptions that deeply influence personal value systems.

### **Fortify each other against wickedness**

Brothers and sisters, we need to instruct one another and instill deeper faith in our hearts to fortify ourselves with the courage to keep the commandments in a world of ever-increasing wickedness. We need to become so deeply converted to the gospel of Christ that the fire of the covenant will burn in our hearts like flame unquenchable. And with that kind of faith we will do what is necessary to remain true and worthy.

### **Communicate openly with children**

Second is communication. Nothing is more important to the relationship between family members than open, honest communication. This is particularly true for parents trying to teach gospel principles and standards to their children. The ability to counsel with our youth—and perhaps more importantly, to really listen to their concerns—is the foundation upon which successful relationships are built. Often what we see in the eyes and what we feel in the heart will communicate far more than what we hear or say. A word to you children: Never be disrespectful to your parents. You must also learn to listen, especially to the counsel of your mom and dad and to the promptings of the Spirit. We need to watch for and capture the special teaching moments that constantly occur within our family relationships, and we need to resolve now to hold family home evening every Monday night.

There are powerful moments of communication through regular family prayer and through family scripture study. The scriptures will help define family values and goals, and talking together about them will assist family members to learn to become individually secure, spiritually strong, and self-reliant. This requires time, and so we need to counsel together about how much television, how many movies, videos, video games, time on the Internet, or out-of-the-home activities should be allowed.

### **Parents and leaders should intervene**

Third is intervention. It is the parents' duty to intervene when they see wrong choices being made. That doesn't mean parents take from children the precious gift of agency. Because agency is a God-given gift, ultimately the choice of what they will do, how they will behave, and what they will believe will always be theirs. But as parents we need to make sure they understand appropriate behavior and the consequences to them if they pursue their wrongful course. Remember, there is no such thing as unlawful censorship in the home. Movies, magazines, television, videos, the Internet, and other media are there as guests and should only be welcomed when they are appropriate for family enjoyment. Make your home a haven of peace and righteousness. Don't allow evil influences to contaminate your own special spiritual environment. Be kind, thoughtful, gentle, and considerate in what you say and how you treat each other. Then family goals based on gospel standards will make it easier to make good decisions.

The same principle applies to you bishops, teachers, and other leaders in the Church as you work to assist families. You don't have to stand idly by as those over whom you have stewardship make poor moral choices. When one of our youth stands at a moral crossroad in life, almost always there is someone—a parent, a leader, a teacher—who could make a difference by intervening with love and kindness.

### **Be a good example to children**

Fourth is example. Just as it is difficult for a weary sailor to find his way across uncharted seas without the aid of a compass, it is almost impossible for children and youth to find their way through the seas of life without the guiding light of a good example. We cannot expect them to avoid those things that

are inappropriate if they see their parents compromising principles and failing to live the gospel.

As parents, teachers, and leaders, it is our solemn duty to set a powerful, personal example of righteous strength, courage, sacrifice, unselfish service, and self-control. These are the traits that will help our youth hold on to the iron rod of the gospel and remain on the straight and narrow path.

### **Living the gospel helps avoid mistakes**

I wish I could tell you that focusing on information, communication, intervention, and example would always result in a perfect family with perfect children who never stray from gospel standards. That is, unfortunately, not the case. But families that know, teach, and live gospel principles and standards are more likely to spare themselves the pain of serious mistakes. When long-established patterns of positive communication and faithful example prevail, it is much easier to counsel together about personal problems and to work through the necessary changes that will bless every family member.

Listen to King Benjamin's significant counsel:

"I cannot tell you all the things whereby [you] may commit sin; for there are divers ways and means, even so many that I cannot number them.

"But this much I can tell you, that if [you] do not watch yourselves, and your thoughts, and your words, and your deeds, and observe the commandments of God, and continue in the faith of what ye have heard concerning the coming of our Lord, even unto the end of your lives, ye must perish. And now, O man, remember, and perish not" (Mosiah 4:29-30).

My brothers and sisters, may God bless every one of us that the fire of our covenants may burn in our hearts like a

flame unquenchable. May we be prepared spiritually to renew our sacred covenants each week as we partake of the sacrament. That we will honor the Lord and we will be anxious to do our part in these most exciting and great days, to build up His Church by strengthening our families is my humble prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Monson**

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us.

As we conclude the conference, we express appreciation to the Mormon Youth Chorus, the combined choir from Ricks College, the combined men's choir from BYU, and the Tabernacle Choir, and their conductors and organists for the beautiful and inspiring music.

We thank our city officials for the cooperation given this conference; the doctors, Church Health Unit nurses, and ambulance services which have been on hand to render assistance; the ushers and interpreters; and those who are responsible for the beautiful flowers on Temple Square and here in the Tabernacle.

We also express appreciation to local and national press representatives for their coverage of the conference and to the owners and operators of the many radio and television stations and cable systems who have given time and made facilities available to carry sessions of this conference in many countries.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet, will be our concluding speaker.

At the conclusion of President Hinckley's remarks, the choir will sing "Come, Follow Me." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Richard J. Maynes of the Seventy, and the conference will be adjourned for six months.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

My brethren and sisters, these have been two glorious days. The inspiration and power of the Holy Ghost have rested upon us. We rejoice together. As we conclude this conference, we have every reason to thank the Lord for His blessings.

The music has been wonderful. We have been lifted and edified by the choirs and choruses which have sung for us. The prayers have drawn us nearer to the Lord, and those who have spoken to us have done so by the power of the Holy Ghost.

### **20th century has been the worst and best**

Now the curtains are gradually closing on this notable and exceptional century. In one respect it has been a shameful period in the history of the world. It has been the worst of all centuries, with more of war, more of man's inhumanity to man, more of conflict and trouble than any other century in the history of the world. It has been the bloodiest of all seasons. It has been a time when the adversary of truth has brought his evil influence of destruction and misery and pain to millions upon millions, as witness what is going on in Yugoslavia. The Father of us all must weep as He looks down upon His quarrelsome children.

But in a larger sense this has been the best of all centuries. In the long history of the earth there has been nothing like it. The life expectancy of man has been extended by more than 25 years. Think of it. It is a miracle. The fruits of science have been manifest everywhere. By and large, we live longer, we live better. This is an age of greater understanding and knowledge. We live in a world of great diversity. As we learn more of one another, our appreciation grows. This has been an age of enlightenment. The miracles of modern medicine, of travel, of communication are almost beyond belief. All of this has opened new opportunities for us which we must grasp and use for the advancement of the Lord's work.

And above all of these marvelous gifts is the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ with all of the wonderful authority and blessings that have come therewith. This is verily the dispensation of the fullness of times, bringing with it that which will never again be taken from the earth.

I believe that Peter was speaking of us when he said, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

### **"Do a little better"**

Now, brethren and sisters, let us return to our homes with resolution in our hearts to do a little better than we have done in the past. We can all be a little kinder, a little more generous, a little more thoughtful of one another. We can be a little more tolerant and friendly to those not of our faith, going out of our way to show our respect for them. We cannot afford to be arrogant or self-righteous. It is our obligation to reach out in helpfulness, not only to our own but to all others as well. Their interest in and respect for this Church will increase as we do so.

I am deeply grateful that as a Church we are extending humanitarian aid when there is sore distress. We have done a great deal and have blessed the lives of many people who are not of our faith but who also are children of our Father. We will continue to do so for as long as we have the means. To all who have contributed to this effort we express our thanks.

### **Strengthen, safeguard families**

Let us continually work to strengthen our families. Let husbands and wives cultivate a spirit of absolute loyalty one to another. Let us not take one another for granted, but let us constantly work to nurture a spirit of love and respect for



each other. We must guard against fault-finding, anger, and disrespect one for another.

Parents, safeguard your families. Bring up your children in light and truth as the Lord has commanded. Shower them with love, but do not spoil them. Share your testimony with them. Read the scriptures together. Guide and protect them. You have no greater blessing and no greater responsibility than those whom the Lord has placed in your care. Pray together. There is no substitute for family prayer when all kneel together before the Lord.

### **Be honest, pray for direction**

Let us be a people of honesty and integrity, doing the right thing at all times and in all circumstances.

Great are our blessings. Tremendous is our responsibility. Let us get on our knees and plead with the Lord for direction. Then let us stand on our feet, square up our shoulders, and march forward without fear to enlarge among people everywhere the righteousness of the Lord.

### **Plans to rebuild the Nauvoo Temple**

In closing now, I feel impressed to announce that among all of the temples we are constructing, we plan to rebuild the Nauvoo Temple. A member of the Church and his family have provided a very substantial contribution to make this possible. We are grateful to him. It will be a while before it happens, but the architects have begun their work. This temple will not be busy much of the time; it will be somewhat isolated. But during the summer months, we anticipate it will be very busy. And the new building will stand as a memorial to those who built the first such structure there on the banks of the Mississippi.

I repeat what I have said before. I love you. I leave my blessing and my testimony of this great and wonderful latter-day work. God be with you till we meet six months from now, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "Come, Follow Me."  
Elder Richard J. Maynes offered the benediction.

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## **SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC**

The Mormon Youth Chorus, directed by Robert C. Bowden, provided music for the Saturday morning session of the conference. Linda Margetts was the organist.

A combined choir from Ricks College provided music for the Saturday afternoon session. Kevin Brower and Clyde Luke directed the choir, and Bonnie Goodliffe was the organist.

A combined men's choir from Brigham Young University provided music for the general priesthood session. Mack Wilberg and Ronald Staheli directed the choir, and Clay Christiansen was the organist.

The Tabernacle Choir, directed by Jerold Ottley and Craig Jessop, provided music for the Sunday morning and afternoon sessions. John Longhurst and Richard Elliott were the organists.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the Tabernacle organ were played by John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Bonnie Goodliffe, and Linda Margetts.

**F. Michael Watson**  
Clerk of the Conference

B

**Ballard, Elder M. Russell** ..... 111

Joy of temple marriage; Morality standards are absolute; Building fortresses of faith in the home; Teach children the gospel; Live by covenant, not convenience; Teach children about morality; Fortify each other against wickedness; Communicate openly with children; Parents and leaders should intervene; Be a good example to children; Living the gospel helps avoid mistakes

C

**Christensen, Elder Joe J.** ..... 8

Overcome greed and selfishness; Materialism consuming our thoughts; Wants are not needs; Avoid spoiling children; Live modestly and avoid debt; Give generously to others

**Church Audit Committee Report for 1998** ..... 25

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D

**Dew, Sister Sheri L.** ..... 83

Christ offers salvation to all; Example of losing the way; The Savior is the only chance; The Lord knows the way, is the way; Activate the power of the Atonement; Being happy when life is hard; Jesus Christ is the only answer

E

**Eyring, Elder Henry B.** ..... 94

Preaching the gospel is a powerful force; The gospel opens eyes, hearts; Prepare to teach by the Spirit; Teach simple, basic doctrine; Teach children the doctrine; Your teaching will be remembered; A young woman preaches the gospel; Gospel teaching influences generations

F

**Faust, President James E. (Saturday morning session)** ..... 19

People have looked to our day; The two greatest historical events; Secular knowledge helps the Lord's work; Prepare spiritually for the future; Fear the breakdown of morals, not Y2K; Face the future with the Savior; Technology aids mission of the Church; Deeper, daily worship necessary; Follow Church leaders, love others; Greater knowledge, blessings in future

**Faust, President James E. (priesthood session) . . . . . 59**

Lack of restraint leads to destruction; Example of President McKay's horse; Earth obeys God's commands; Earning trust leads to more freedom; Pharaoh trusts Joseph; Obedience brings blessings; A man obeys promptings; Obedience brings freedom and liberty

**G****General Authorities Present . . . . . 1****General Priesthood Session . . . . . 50****H****Haight, Elder David B. . . . . 86**

Love and service bring rewards; Showing love for the Savior; Need for couple missionaries; Examples of missionary service

**Hales, Elder Robert D. . . . . 39**

The Spirit strengthens families; Teaching the gospel strengthens families; Ideas for strengthening families; Home should be a safe place; Teach children to pray, read the scriptures, listen to worthy music; Hold family home evening, councils; Share the gospel, support Church leaders, participate as a family; Teach children to be good friends, prepare for the future; Share heritage, family traditions; Teach the importance of obeying the commandments, receiving ordinances; Be aware of community, school, and Church activities; Follow the Lord's example of love; Children who stray will return; Single adults, extended family can lend strength; No perfect families; Set house, family in order

**Hinckley, President Gordon B. (Saturday morning session) . . . . . 2**

Gathering for conference; Work of the Church moves forward; Strengthen and value each member

**Hinckley, President Gordon B. (priesthood session) . . . . . 67**

Priesthood is tremendous brotherhood; Priesthood is the backbone of Church; Realize the importance of priesthood; Rise above the evils of the world; Do what is right; Gratitude for bishops; Church organization effective in crisis; Requirements of bishops; Example of a bishop's influence; Role of bishops; Blessing for bishops

**Hinckley, President Gordon B. (Sunday morning session) . . . . . 89**

Gratitude for the members; Gratitude for Jesus Christ; No one escapes death; Through Jesus Christ all live; Jesus as a young boy; Jesus' early ministry; Jesus' teachings; Betrayal and crucifixion; Events of the Resurrection; Appearances following the Resurrection; Millions have believed in Christ; Book of Mormon is a witness; Joseph Smith's witness of God; Testimony of Jesus Christ

- Hinckley, President Gordon B. (Sunday afternoon session) . . . . . 116**  
 20th century has been the worst and best; "Do a little better";  
 Strengthen, safeguard families; Be honest, pray for direction; Plans to  
 rebuild the Nauvoo Temple

- Holland, Elder Jeffrey R. . . . . 15**  
 Gratitude to God the Father; Jesus' relationship with His Father;  
 Strengthen relationships with children; Absence of fathers damages chil-  
 dren; Most fathers are wonderful; Follow God's example of fatherhood;  
 Influence of a father's love; Scriptural examples of a father's impact

## J

- Jensen, Elder Marlin K. . . . . 80**  
 Friendship is a fundamental need; Friendship starts at home; Church or-  
 ganization fosters friendship; Friendship needed to serve, teach; Reach  
 out to others; Sincere friendship at core of fellowship; Be a friend

## K

- Kofford, Elder Cree-L . . . . . 106**  
 "Over this line you may not cross"; "Your name is safe in our home"; Do  
 not speak evil about others; Accountable for our words; Children can re-  
 mind families to speak only good

## M

- Maxwell, Elder Neal A. . . . . 27**  
 Selfishness is self-destruction; Signs of selfishness; Meekness cures self-  
 ishness; Selfishness accelerates cultural decline; Selfishness: cause of all  
 cardinal sins; Selfishness distorts perception; Selfish people use others;  
 Watch for societal selfishness; Examples of unselfish leaders; A young  
 girl's unselfish prayer

- McMullin, Bishop Keith B. . . . . 103**  
 Life is a homeward journey; Select the path carefully; Life is eternal; The  
 nature of sin; The gift of conscience and repentance; Atonement makes  
 our return possible; A man finds his way back to the Church; Prepare  
 now to return to God's presence

- Monson, President Thomas S. (priesthood session) . . . . . 63**  
 Safeguarding life's foundations; Living and dead water; Too few young  
 men becoming elders; Some young men learn about tithing; Assign  
 priesthood duties; Example of priests blessing sacrament; Leaders, fami-  
 lies are a major influence; Impact goes far beyond the young man; Rescue

adult converts too; Choose instructors prayerfully; Example of an effective teacher; Seek divine help; Pursue the right path; "Do you work for God?"

**Monson, President Thomas S. (Sunday morning session) . . . . . 72**

Jesus taught in parables; Example of a blind man; Different kinds of blindness; Jesus heals a blind man; Peter denies Christ, receives new birth; "Put on the new man"; All have the Light of Christ; Example of seeing Christ in others; Must have light to give light; Joseph Smith's First Vision; A blind man seeks a blessing for sight; Temples reflect the Light of Christ; Trust the true light

**Music, Summary of Conference . . . . . 117**

**N**

**Nelson, Elder Russell M. . . . . 50**

A young man's sin dishonors his mother; Honor motherhood; A mother's letter saves her child; Honor your sisters; Honor your wife; The family is ordained of God; Fathers preside over the family in love; Express love to your wife, mother, sisters

**Neuenschwander, Elder Dennis B. . . . . 109**

Building eternal keepsakes; Family history bridges generations; Start recording your history; Importance of knowing your ancestors; Family history strengthens all members; A major factor in activation, retention; Family history work ties to temple work

**O**

**Oaks, Elder Dallin H. . . . . 45**

The law of witnesses; Book of Mormon witnesses; Testimony of the Three Witnesses; Three Witnesses never denied testimony; Martin Harris as a witness; Martin well-respected in the community; Stolen and lost 116 pages; Selected as one of the Three Witnesses; Finances printing of Book of Mormon; Consecrates his property to Zion; Serves a mission in Pennsylvania; Serves on the first high council; Helps select the Twelve Apostles; Loses confidence in Joseph Smith; Moves to Kirtland, is rebaptized; Moves to Utah, reaffirms his testimony; Dies at age 92; Return and feast at the Lord's table

**P**

**Packer, President Boyd K. . . . . 77**

A bishop abandons his own work to help; Responsibilities of bishops; Bishops are called and ordained; Right to revelation; Be considerate of a bishop's time; The Church is no bigger than a ward; Parents' responsibilities to family

<b>Perry, Elder L. Tom</b> .....	4
Sunday School organized; Everyone has a responsibility to teach; Teach as the Savior taught; Study the word of God before teaching; Teach by the Spirit; Example of a teacher's influence	

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<b>Tobler, Elder D. Lee</b> .....	57
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## W

- West, Elder Stephen A. . . . . 34**  
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- Whetten, Elder Robert J. . . . . 37**  
 Love others as the Savior does; Seek to be filled with charity; Love and serve others; A young girl shows Christlike love; Be full of love; Give "all that you have and are"; Lift one another's burdens
- Wirthlin, Elder Joseph B. . . . . 98**  
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- Wood, Elder Ray H. . . . . 54**  
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THE CHURCH OF  
JESUS CHRIST  
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

